

THE Nation.

SPECIAL ISSUE



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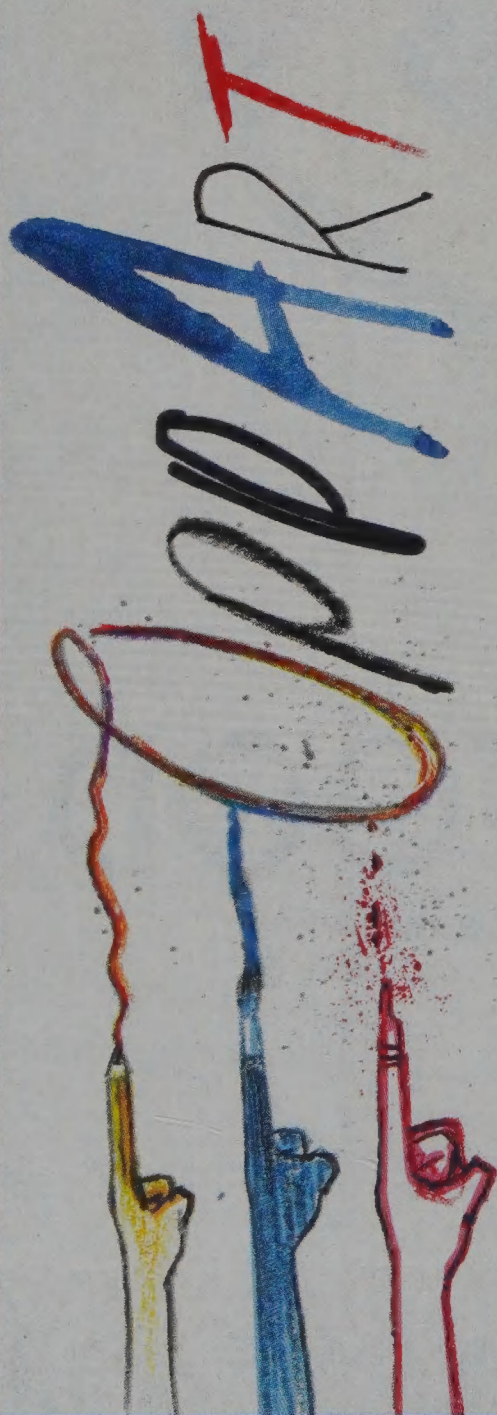
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PETER KUPER

Letters

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Thoughts on *What Happened*

I quite enjoyed Katha Pollitt's column "Hillary Clinton Tells All" [Oct. 9]. It seems fitting that a year after the election, Pollitt addresses CNN Hillary-hater extraordinaire Dylan Byers's recent tweet that "The Hillary Clinton 'I-take-full-responsibility-but-here-are-all-the-other-reasons-I-lost' tour continues to be intrinsically problematic."

Few "journalists" are more to blame for Donald Trump's rise and Hillary's loss—no, *our* loss—than Byers. He wrote in *Politico* on May 7, 2015: "Never has the national media been more primed to take down Hillary Clinton (and by the same token elevate a Republican candidate)."

That's right, he didn't write "expose her falsehoods" or "detail her hypocrisy." He wrote that the media was "primed to take [her] down." And the rest is history.

When will journalists learn?

BERNIE EVANS
SAVANNAH, GA.

In Katha Pollitt's column, she misses a point that Bernie Sanders didn't miss: that Clinton never found a war she couldn't support. Didn't she learn anything from Vietnam? All the comparisons Pollitt puts into her column pale in comparison with this one. No wonder it was left out of Clinton's book and left out of the policies she presented in the campaign.

GLENN UMONT
ALAMO, CALIF.

I want to praise Katha Pollitt for her supportive column. In spite of what the media maintains, Hillary Clinton was not a bad candidate, nor did she run a poor campaign.

Hillary won the popular vote by 3 million ballots, which is more than Kennedy over Nixon in 1960, Nixon over Humphrey in 1968, Carter over Ford in 1976, and Bush over Gore in

2000, and the same margin as Bush over Kerry in 2004. Trump was appointed by the Electoral College. He was not elected president. In a true democracy, which this country is not, the candidate who wins the popular vote is elected. The presidency was stolen from Clinton by James Comey, Vladimir Putin, Julian Assange, and Matt Lauer, who used what was supposed to be a forum on the Veterans Administration to attack Hillary on her e-mails.

Hillary Clinton, not Donald Trump, was the people's choice. Trump's ascension to the presidency is the biggest tragedy in US history. With Hillary, we would have had an experienced, capable, well-informed president. Instead, we are stuck with a mentally deranged criminal degenerate.

REBA SHIMANSKY
NEW YORK CITY

Down With Epistocracy

A simple answer to Jason Brennan's obviously pessimistic message, as described in Jan-Werner Müller's review of his book *Against Democracy* ["Blaming the People," Oct. 9], is to admit that most people are not going to learn a lot about the issues. For example, they don't know basic macroeconomics, such as that job growth is promoted by demand coming from everyone, rather than by tax cuts for the rich; the rich have a record of financializing and disinvesting more than investing, especially now, following the MBA-ization of America.

Since people do not know the issues, the only way to gain their support is to do stuff. People came to support Franklin Roosevelt's programs in the 1930s, as well as Medicare and the Affordable Care Act.

More things to do: Many of our technologies and industries began

Comments drawn from our website

letters@thenation.com

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Dropping the Bomb

With all the bad news filling the headlines, we are thrilled to trumpet something uplifting: the awarding of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a scrappy coalition of groups from around the world that

played a decisive role in the adoption, this past July, of an international treaty banning the production, possession, and use of nuclear munitions. While many activists had become discouraged over the prospects for further progress on the nuclear issue, ICAN turned the tide by emphasizing the humanitarian impacts of a nuclear war, which would affect every country on the planet, whether or not they were parties to the fighting.

As the Nobel Committee ruefully acknowledged, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons “will not in itself eliminate a single nuclear weapon,” given that the nuclear-armed states have shown no interest in signing it. For the organizations and governments that share ICAN’s objectives, this means a lot more work ahead to bring the treaty into force (this will occur when 50 nations ratify it) and persuade the nuclear-armed states to join it. Needless to say, this will not, in today’s fractious political landscape, prove an easy task.

But getting states to sign the treaty is not the only objective of this effort: Equally vital is the drive to establish an international legal norm against the use of nuclear weapons, akin to the existing norms against land mines, cluster munitions, and biological and chemical weapons. “Nuclear weapons are even more destructive [than those other munitions],” Nobel Committee chair Berit Reiss-Andersen noted, “but have not yet been made the object of a similar international legal prohibition.”

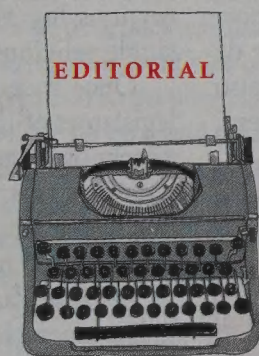
Propounding and establishing a norm against the use of nuclear weapons has never been more critical. For decades, we have been spared unimaginable death and destruction in part because of arms-control treaties that reduce the risk of a nuclear exchange, and in part because of the disinclination of leaders to be the first to order such a strike since the US bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in

1945. This nuclear taboo was especially evident during the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962. Ronald Reagan, in his final years as president, and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev also came to recognize the horror of nuclear war, and so discussed the elimination of these weapons.

Today, any reluctance on the part of key world leaders to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons appears to be vanishing. One after another, top officials in Russia, India, Pakistan, North Korea, the United States, and NATO have taken steps or made statements indicating a greater inclination to employ such arms.

Russia, for example, appears to have violated the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which prohibits ground-launched cruise missiles with a range of 500 to 5,000 kilometers, by deploying a cruise missile capable of flying within that range. Moscow has also adopted a strategic doctrine that calls for the early use of nuclear weapons in the event of a major NATO assault on its territory—a move that has been cited in the West as justification for the deployment of additional nuclear-capable aircraft and cruise missiles to deter the Russians. In much the same manner, military officials in India and Pakistan have announced plans to employ nuclear weapons at an early stage in any major encounter.

However, nothing is as troubling as the statements by Kim Jong-un of North Korea and Donald Trump of the United States suggesting an unfettered readiness to employ nuclear weapons in any future confrontation. The North Koreans have often used inflammatory language, threatening to engulf South Korea in a “sea of fire” if it threatened the North, but many US and foreign officials were shocked in August when President Trump warned



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50%

Amount of produce thrown away in the US every year

8%

Greenhouse-gas emissions accounted for by global food waste—more than the output of the entire European Union

\$1,600

Amount the average family of four in the US spends each year on food they end up throwing out

\$940B

Estimated annual cost of food waste globally

"Is there anything on this planet more political than food? No, there is not. Who eats? Who doesn't eat?"

Anthony Bourdain, chef, author, TV host, and producer of a new documentary on the world's "shocking" level of wasted food

that the North "will be met with fire and fury and, frankly, power the likes of which this world has never seen before"—an unmistakable reference to nuclear weapons.

The hints of nuclear enthusiasm on both sides have proliferated ever since. In his address to the UN General Assembly on September 19, Trump belittled Kim and warned that if provoked, "we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea." Kim responded three days later by describing Trump as "mentally deranged" and said the North would prepare the "highest level of hard-line countermeasure in history." Since then, North Korea has advised Japan that it will be "sunken into the sea by the nuclear bomb" if it continued its support for US policies, and warned that the United States itself will be reduced to "ashes and darkness."

The path to increased nuclear-weapons acceptance will be further cleared by Trump's expected decision to "decertify" Iran's compliance with the 2015 nuclear accord, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Under the plan, Iran agreed to curb its uranium-enrichment program for 15 years and to take other steps aimed at eradicating its capacity to produce materials for nuclear weapons—all under international inspection—in return for the suspension of economic sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union. In decertifying Iranian compliance, Trump will claim that Tehran has violated the "spirit" of the agreement by continuing its missile buildup and aiding insurgent groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen—activities not proscribed by the agreement. Under US law, Congress will then have the authority to reimpose sanctions, a step that would constitute de facto annulment of the agreement. Congress could also call upon the administration to renegotiate the agreement, a step that is likely to go nowhere, as the other signatories—Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China, and the European Union—have expressed satisfaction with the JCPOA and Iran's compliance with it.

The danger in all this is that anti-Iranian hard-liners in Congress—Democrats as well as Republicans—will eventually vote to reimpose sanctions on Iran, leading Tehran to abandon the JCPOA and, under pressure from its own hard-liners, resume nuclear enrichment. This could lead in two directions, both equally frightening: Iran could eventually acquire nuclear weapons, leading other nations in the area to do so as well; or the United States and Israel, alone or together, could attack Iranian nuclear and military facilities before they reach full weapons capacity, sparking a regional conflagration.

There is no doubt that we have entered an era of greater nuclear-weapons acceptance on the part of major world leaders—and this, in a moment of crisis, could make the difference between restraint and impulsiveness. As Nobel Committee chair Reiss-Andersen stated: "We

We have entered an era of greater nuclear-weapons acceptance by major world leaders.

live in a world where the risk of nuclear weapons being used is greater than it has been for a long time." All this makes the task of repudiating such insanity and reinforcing the taboo against their use that much more urgent.

This year's awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to ICAN should be viewed, then, as a moment to celebrate a genuine accomplishment on the road to peace as well as a call for redoubled efforts to bolster the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons. Among other things, this means supporting ICAN in its drive to press for worldwide ratification of the nuclear-ban treaty while also pressuring our representatives to eliminate Trump's ability to launch a nuclear first strike without congressional authorization—a measure introduced by Senator Edward Markey and Representative Ted Lieu—and to combat the president's bellicose stance on North Korea.

Antitrust Facebook

The social-media giant's power is unprecedented.

On June 27, Mark Zuckerberg, the founder and CEO of Facebook, announced that "the Facebook community is now officially 2 billion people!" It took the platform a little more than eight years to reach 1 billion users, and then less than five years to reach the second billion. Close to two-thirds of users visit the site at least once a day. There is no other human entity on earth as big as Facebook—no country, no business, no single religious denomination.

Once it was said that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. In our digital age, coders are the unacknowledged legislators, determining the rules and pathways that we use to connect with one another. And one coder, Zuckerberg, is the unacknowledged president of the largest nation on earth, which I call Facebookistan.

Because Zuckerberg has hired two buckraking campaign operatives, David Plouffe and Ken Mehlman, to advise him, and because he's been traveling around America on a "listening tour," many have speculated that he is planning to run for president of the United States. But this is using a 20th-century lens to look at a 21st-century phenomenon. As someone who zealously protects *his own* privacy, Zuckerberg would never submit to the rituals of an American presidential campaign. Besides, with two-thirds of American adults on Facebook, and with 43 percent saying that online social networks are where they often get their news, Zuckerberg already has all the power he needs. In Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, the European Union, Ecuador, Iceland, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia, and Vietnam, Facebook is the dominant online social network, with anywhere from 40 to 90 percent of the local population using it. Like the Lawnmower Man, a fictional character who defeats his adversaries by uploading his consciousness to the world's

Q&A DANNY MEYER

It was 1983, the night before the LSAT, when Danny Meyer decided to ditch the law and follow his passion: food. He got a job at a seafood restaurant in New York

City, and the next year he opened his first restaurant, Union Square Cafe, at age 27. Today, his Union Square Hospitality Group stretches across 15 restaurants and a burger chain, Shake Shack, that Meyer grew from a single hot-dog cart in a city park to a billion-dollar enterprise with locations from Connecticut to Dubai. His restaurants have been celebrated by critics not only for their food, but also for their meticulous attention to hospitality. Eleven Madison Park, which Meyer opened in 1998, is one of just five restaurants to currently hold *The New York Times*' highest ranking of four stars. Meyer is increasingly seen as a leader in bringing progressive values to a cutthroat industry. Case in point: In 2015, he announced that a number of his restaurants would eliminate what he's called "one of the biggest hoaxes ever pulled on an entire culture": tipping.

—Anna Lappé

AL: In 2015, you upended one of the longest-standing conventions in the industry by ending tipping at several of your fine-dining establishments. What was your motivation? What are the benefits, from the business side?

DM: The tipping system has allowed restaurants to make it the customer's responsibility to pay the lion's share of servers' compensation, and has unwittingly created several conse-

quences. Menu prices don't reflect the true cost of dining out; cooks and nontipped employees are squeezed with very low pay; tipped employees get hooked on a "gratuity drug" that prevents them from advancing their careers; and a false master-servant relationship often exists between restaurant patron and server.

Since eliminating tips, we've been able to increase the pay for nontipped, back-of-house employees; increase hourly pay and add a revenue-sharing model for servers; and create a merit-based system for servers to receive raises based on technical skills and hospitality. Eliminating tips means servers have an opportunity to earn steady pay other than on week-end nights. It also means we've been able to get far ahead of minimum-wage increases that will impact other restaurants which still accept tips.

AL: You've often been ahead of the curve, from ending tipping to banning smoking at Union Square Cafe more than a decade before New York City passed its smoking ban. What do you think is the next frontier?

DM: We are far from finished with the movement away from tips, so it feels premature to think of the next frontier. Our industry needs to educate itself and then restaurant consumers

to understand that dining well costs a lot more money than meets the eye. If we want great ingredients grown with care and without pesticides, animals raised humanely, and restaurant employees who can afford to live in our communities and thrive, then we have to be willing to pay what it truly costs to have it all.

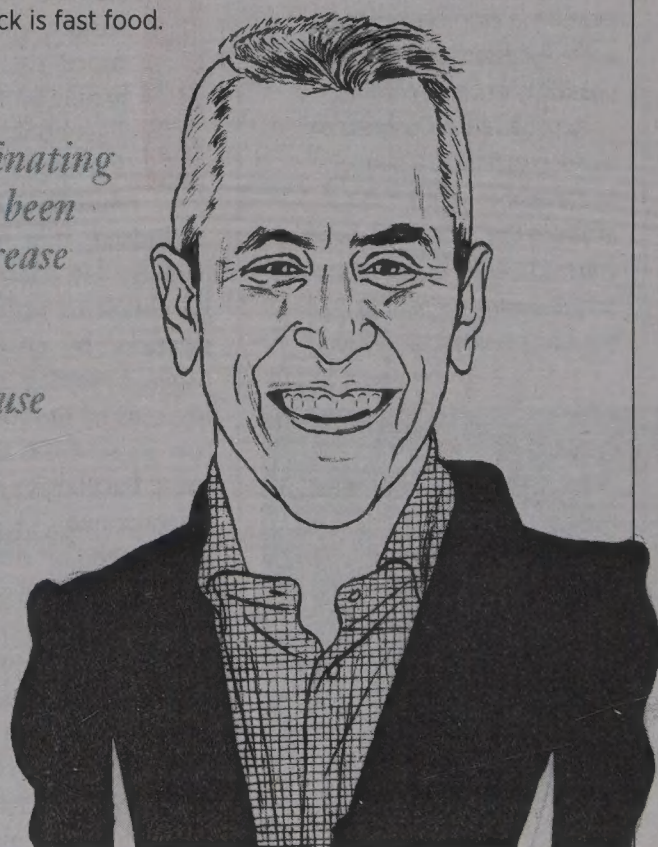
AL: Your burger empire is clocking in at more than 125 locations and growing, with investors aiming for a goal of 450 Shake Shacks. That's a lot of burgers. Is it possible to make fast food sustainable and ethical? How do you source your meat and ensure that your values of sustainability, animal welfare, and worker protection are embedded in what must be a very complicated supply chain?

DM: No one has ever suggested that Shake Shack is fast food.

We call our category "fine casual," since we've adopted and fully value many of the standards and philosophies from our fine-dining restaurants. These include how we source ingredients, design our restaurants, work in our communities, and hire, train, and treat our employees.

The supply team at Shake Shack cares deeply about every ingredient that goes into our products. Our meat is free of antibiotics and artificial growth hormones; the eggs and chickens we use are cage-free; the french fries are non-GMO. Each Shake Shack is built with an eye on sustainability; every single Shack selects and supports a local not-for-profit organization; and our employees have a clear understanding of how to advance their careers. ■

Since eliminating tips, we've been able to increase the pay for nontipped, back-of-house employees.



TRUMP'S BUDGET

Hard to Stomach

Donald Trump's 2018 budget drew the ire of health advocates after he proposed slashing the funding for the Food and Drug Administration by nearly a third.

The FDA had already been struggling. In a September report, federal auditors revealed that FDA inspectors had failed to take action in more than 20 percent of the cases involving "significant inspection violations" at food-manufacturing sites. These included a location where listeria was detected in 2013 and again in 2015, as well as the FDA's failure to send a warning letter after it found salmonella at a facility that made ready-to-eat salads and seafood.

Despite the nearly \$1 billion decrease in taxpayer funding, the White House claims that the FDA's budget would actually *increase* after a doubling of user fees—which medical industries agree to pay in order to register and manufacture drugs and biological products. The Alliance for a Stronger FDA, an advocacy organization, has lashed out at Trump, stating that such an increase in user fees has "never been discussed" and has "no possibility of being enacted."

Republicans in Congress are working to finalize a budget by November—but if it looks anything like Trump's proposal, you might want to put off grocery shopping (or eating) until the next presidential election.

—Miguel Salazar



computer networks, Zuck's reach extends far beyond our humble borders.

It's much more likely that Zuckerberg has gone on the road to contain the fallout from the ongoing investigations into Facebook's role in the 2016 election and the myriad questions they raise. We now know, from research published by the company's own data scientists, that Facebook has the power to alter its users' moods merely by changing how many positive or negative posts it surfaces in their feeds. We also know that it can increase voter registration by reminding people of upcoming deadlines, and it can increase voter turnout by showing people that their friends are voting—a tool that Facebook calls its "voter megaphone." We know that it can and has tweaked the News Feed algorithm many times. For example, in 2012 it decided to add more "hard news" to the mix (with a list of supposedly acceptable news sources ranging from *Mother Jones* to RushLimbaugh.com) after discovering that doing so didn't turn users off. Now there are suspicions that another change to the algorithm may be hurting traffic to left-wing news sites.

We have to trust Facebook when its spokespeople say they are not abusing these powers to the benefit of any partisan cause. While the company has tried to downplay its ability to influence political choices, internal documents obtained by *The Australian* revealed that Facebook routinely tells advertisers that it knows exactly which buttons they should press to sell their products to impressionable young people. We should assume the same is true for other audiences. Don't forget, dear reader, especially if—as is more than likely—you are reading this article on Facebook right now: You are not Facebook's customer; you are its product. Facebook's only true constituency is its millions of advertisers.

Indeed, it is becoming more clear with each passing day that operatives tied to Russia used Facebook to insinuate themselves into the 2016 election, by creating fake accounts and group pages, pumping up false news stories, and targeting tens of millions of users with ads designed to sow division and affect their inclination to vote. Because Facebook's algorithms are tuned to optimize "engagement," meaning the amount of time its users spend on the site, such inflammatory content was catnip. But the Russia-Trump connection is not the central question to focus on when it comes to Facebook's power; it's just the tipping point that is causing many people to pay attention at last.

You can't solve a problem if you can't even name it, and we're just beginning to find words to adequately describe the issues raised by Facebook and other dominant tech platforms like Google

and Amazon. In a very important article in *The Yale Law Journal*, "Amazon's Antitrust Paradox," Lina Khan of the Open Markets Institute notes that, while Amazon has lowered prices for consumers across many market categories, it has also abused its monopoly power in numerous ways. For example, it has mined internal data on the usage of its Amazon Web Services platform to figure out which tech start-ups were taking off and thus gain an insider's advantage on investment decisions. It has also created copycat products under the AmazonBasics label to directly compete with outside retailers by using internal data about the best-selling products on the site. Third-party sellers who use Amazon's delivery service do better in search results. Likewise, Google has used its dominant position as the main place that people go to search for information to sometimes favor its own

content, such as travel-booking services and restaurant recommendations.

Since Facebook is currently a de facto social utility, it's tempting to propose that it be regulated, perhaps in a manner similar to the ways that the government has regulated telecommunications companies. For example, as Harold Feld of Public Knowledge has argued, Facebook could be required to show that it is

not discriminating against particular classes of users or individuals when it comes to who it allows on the platform or how they're permitted to use it. Thus, when Facebook fires up its voter megaphone, the company could be required to show technical auditors that it is indeed being used in a neutral way. Likewise, when Google or Amazon exploit their market dominance in Web searches to privilege their own products, an antitrust case could be made that they're unfairly rigging the marketplace.

It's hard to see where the political will to explore these sorts of remedies is going to come from. Most of my liberal friends, confronted by the evidence that Facebook was used to meddle in the election, still can't find the energy to quit or stop using the platform. Online organizers, who arguably have more awareness of the problems with Facebook, are equally committed to sticking with it, because "that's where the people are." To imagine fixing the democracy-distorting effects of Facebook's power, you have to be able to see beyond its boundaries, to a world where how we learn, play, and socialize isn't structured by the Lawnmower Man and surveillance capitalism. And I fear that our ability to imagine that world is rapidly fading.

MICAH L. SIFRY

Micah L. Sifry is co-founder and executive director of Civic Hall. His most recent book, edited with Tiago Peixoto, is *Civic Tech in the Global South: Assessing Technology for the Public Good*.

*Don't forget,
dear reader,
you are not
Facebook's
customer;
you are its
product.*

COMMENT

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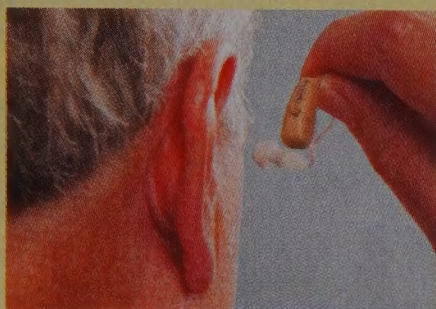
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FOOD FIGHTS

Slime and Punishment

Earlier this summer, the Walt Disney Company, which owns ABC News, settled a lawsuit with the meat-processing company Beef Products Inc. over a 2012 news story on “pink slime”—or “lean, finely textured beef,” if you prefer the industry term. Made from leftover trimmings, the beef by-product is used as filler in many restaurant and supermarket meats. It looks like, well, pink slime, but there’s no evidence that it’s dangerous. The lawsuit alleged that ABC News had implied otherwise, causing Beef Products Inc. incalculable losses in sales and reputation.

According to *The New York Times*, the Walt Disney Company “said in its latest quarterly financial statement that it had \$177 million in costs related to settling litigation,” without specifying if those expenditures were due in whole or in part to the pink-slime lawsuit. But Beef Products Inc.’s lawyer in the case told the *Times*, not without some satisfaction, that Disney’s insurers had forked over even more.

Beef Products Inc. claims that the outcry following the ABC News report nearly put it out of business, although by 2014 major vendors had already started to reincorporate pink slime into their meats. While ABC has never retracted the story, which didn’t directly assert that pink slime is unsafe, the settlement is among the largest payouts ever recorded in a defamation case. That sets a disturbing precedent: a major media company choosing to hand over a huge sum of money to a corporation rather than defend in court what it says is an accurately reported story. That might be OK for companies owned by Disney, but for smaller news outlets, it could make any beef with a corporation fatal.

—Jake Bittle

Eric Alterman



Liar and Lunatic

The media must stop normalizing Trump’s bizarre and dangerous actions.

The fact that Donald Trump behaves in a fashion so profoundly inappropriate for an adult male, much less the most powerful person in the world, presents a challenge for the mainstream media. Every day the news gives journalists a new wonderment. Trump’s own secretary of state reportedly thinks that he’s a “fucking moron.” The Republican chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations tweeted that the White House was “an adult day care center” for a president whose “reality-show” behavior could lead to World War III. Barely an hour goes by without Trump saying or doing something that would have been unthinkable for any president before him. And those rare moments of quiet from Trump are filled with the malevolent actions of a clown car full of his cabinet appointees, including Betsy DeVos, Jeff Sessions, Scott Pruitt, Rick Perry, and Ben Carson, among others.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s and Senator Bob Corker’s statements may be opening a door to a more honest discussion. But up until now, most press coverage of the Trump administration has been to enable, rather than expose, the president. No matter how absurd his actions, he has continued to benefit from a campaign of normalization based on a combination of purposeful blindness, wishful thinking, and a commitment to outdated professional mores.

Examples of this phenomenon abound. There is *The New York Times*’ Peter Baker, making the nonsensical case that, although Trump was elected “as a Republican last year, [he] has shown in the nearly eight months in office that he is, in many ways, the first independent to hold the presidency since the advent of the current two-party system around the time of the Civil War.” But while it’s true that Trump bickers with Republican leaders and has enjoyed the occasional cordial meeting with Democrats, Baker’s thesis largely ignores Trump’s pursuit of extremist right-wing policies on consumer regulation, tax policy, labor rights, LGBTQ-related issues, defense spending... indeed, absolutely everything. Baker, like almost every reporter in the White House press corps, evinces little interest in policy. Personality is all, and Trump’s trumps them all.

The *Times* does deserve credit for its willingness to employ the word “lie” in Trump’s case—the first president ever to earn that honor. This is not true of *The Washington Post*, however. Despite the fact that the *Post*, like the *Times*, reports aggressively on the carnival of White House malfeasance and misanthropy, editor Marty Baron refuses to allow its reporters to provide this crucial crumb of context. “I think you have to actually have documentation, proof, that whoever you’re saying lied actually knew that what he or she was saying was in fact false,” he recently explained. And yet Baron is also unwilling to accept the only other explanation for Trump’s behavior: The president is nuts.

There’s no question that Trump is a pathological liar. He lies all the time, often for no discernible reason. *The Washington Post* has tallied 1,318 “false and misleading claims” in his first 263 days in office. You may have missed the fact that, in

the space of a few days following the most recent collapse of the Republican effort to repeal Obamacare, Trump insisted on seven separate occasions that the vote failed because “somebody [was] in the hospital.”

But nobody was in the hospital. The alleged somebody to whom Trump was referring, Thad Cochran (R-MS), tweeted this himself, and his office repeatedly corrected the president. But Trump didn’t notice or care; he simply kept on lying. When asked about this bizarre behavior, the best that any of his enablers or aides could come up with was that Trump was “just, you know, doing his thing.” So which is it, Mr. Baron: liar or lunatic? (I cast my vote for both.)

The mainstream media have no language to describe this situation. It’s hard to grasp just how weird—and dangerous—it is that this maniac is America’s president. Tony Schwartz got to know



There’s no question that Trump is a pathological liar. He lies all the time, often for no discernible reason.

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS TELEVISION

WITH **BILL MILLER**

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Bill Miller is an accredited journalist at the UN for the Washington International and has written extensively on UN issues.

He is the Principal of Miller and Associates International Media Consultants, which created the Global Connection Television concept.

Bill developed an interest in international issues and the UN when he served as a US Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic. In his first year he worked as a community developer in a remote rural area; his second year he was Professor of Social Work at the Madre y Maestra University in Santiago, the country's second largest city.

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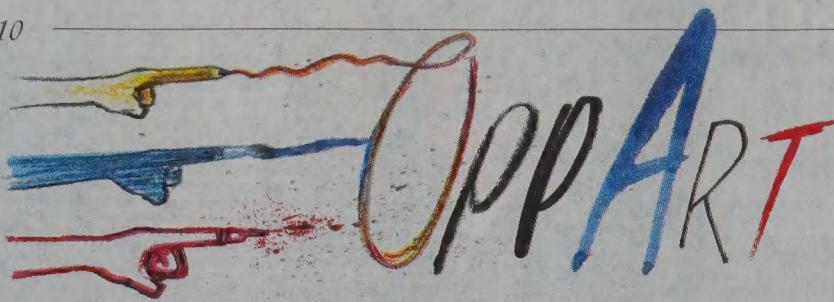
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NATION NEWS

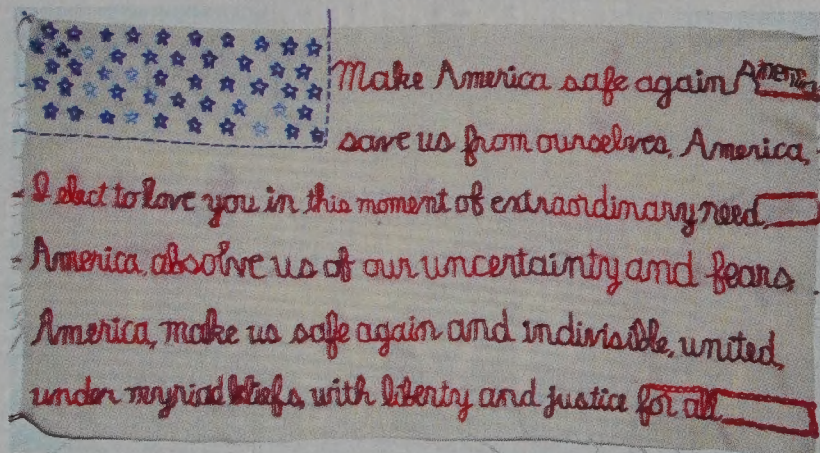
Drawing Opposition

The Nation has launched OppArt, a series of daily artistic dispatches from the front lines of the resistance. Spearheaded by illustrators Andrea Arroyo, Steve Brodner, and Peter Kuper, OppArt will showcase progressive art that confronts and exposes power. To see more, visit thenation.com/oppart.



Trigger / Edel Rodriguez

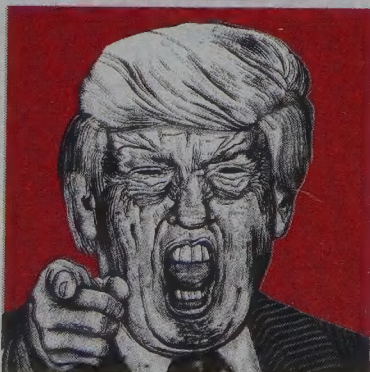
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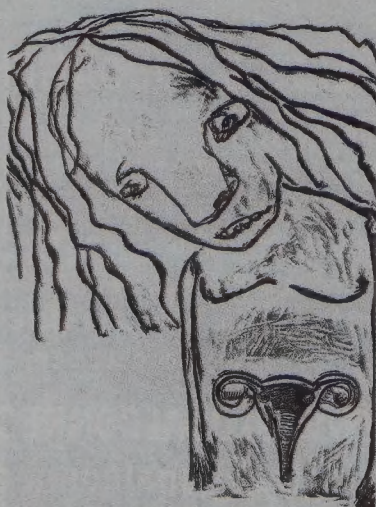
Bully Culprit / Robbie Conal

Repro Rights / Frances Jetter

BULLY



CULPRIT



Trump as the ghostwriter for his book *The Art of the Deal*. His assessment? "Trump is willing to start a NUCLEAR WAR & kill tens of millions of people to divert attention from his failures. He is a madman."

Too many members of the media find themselves intellectually paralyzed by this president. Reporting on him truthfully, in context, and explaining just how outlandish his behavior is involves violating journalistic taboos that were put in place when the presidency was not occupied by a psychopath with only the most tenuous grip on reality.

Denial is the only mode in which these institutions feel comfortable operating. This explains why we keep reading stories about how Trump is somehow all of a sudden acting "presidential" when he happens to say or do something that is at least imaginable coming from one of his predecessors. For instance, following the Las Vegas gunman's killing of 58 people at a country-music festival, Trump gave a speech in which he failed to praise Nazis, attack black quarterbacks, mock Hispanic mayors whose cities were underwater and without power, or insist that Barack Obama was born in Kenya. (Of course, the mass murderer was white and not Muslim, Mexican, or black, so the massacre did not offer Trump an opportunity to stoke his base.) Afterward, one could almost feel the combination of relief and release with which CNN's John King told his viewers, "I don't think that, whatever your politics are, there is anything you can take issue with [in] what we just heard from the president of the United States." Trump's words were, he insisted, "pitch-perfect." The network's Jeff Zeleny then praised the president as "a unifier," while Poppy Harlow warned against any naysaying: "This is the time to bring the country together." There hadn't been such joy inside a CNN studio since Fareed Zakaria was so thrilled by Trump's bombing of Syria. ■

Calvin Trillin Deadline Poet

HARVEY WEINSTEIN, HOLLYWOOD PREDATOR

"He appeared in a bathrobe and asked if he could give her a massage or she could watch him shower, she recalled in an interview." —*The New York Times*

He hit on starlets and on stars.
He saw this as a perk of power.
Were some so desperate they agreed
To watch while Harvey took a shower?

It sounds more like a captor's threat,
Delivered with a scary glower:
"Reveal all secrets that you know
Or you'll watch Harvey take a shower."

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FOOD INSECURITY

Hunger in America

The number of US households suffering from food insecurity has decreased slowly since 2011, when nearly 15 percent struggled to provide “adequate, nutritious food,” according to a recent report by the US Department of Agriculture. Last year, that number fell to about 12 percent—roughly 15.6 million people, and still a percentage point higher than pre-recession levels.

Black and Latino households are more likely to go hungry in the United States. In 2016, black households experienced an uptick in food insecurity, while during the same period the rate decreased for white households. Northeastern states have made modest gains, but food insecurity in nonmetro and rural areas across the country jumped by more than a percentage point in 2016.

One of the easiest ways to help would be to provide people with better access to existing government assistance. According to an analysis by *Fast Company*, four out of 10 food-insecure households haven’t received aid in the form of food stamps or other initiatives like the National School Lunch Program. There have been several attempts to tackle this problem, including Fed40, an app to deliver free meal kits to food-insecure families. But such immediate solutions also need to be met with long-term action by the US government to make it easier for individuals to obtain a healthy meal.

—Miguel Salazar



Laila Lalami



The Color of Terrorism

Why are white male shooters described as “lone wolves”?

Here we are again: one man, a cache of assault weapons, innocent victims. This time it happened in Las Vegas, where a 64-year-old gambler broke through the windows of his room on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay hotel and, from that vantage point, fired into the crowd at an outdoor country-music concert, killing 58 people and injuring nearly 500 others. When I heard about the massacre on the radio, I knew, even in the midst of my horror, that the suspect was a white man, because the reporter referred to him as a “gunman,” not as a “terrorist.” The difference has far-reaching consequences for how the country responds to mass shootings, which have claimed hundreds of lives and are most often perpetrated by white men, many of whom espouse extremist right-wing ideologies.

Consider how our media talk about mass shootings and terrorist attacks. Stephen Paddock, the murderer in Las Vegas, was called a “lone wolf,” a “gunman,” and even a “sniper,” while Omar Mateen, who killed 49 people in Orlando, Florida, in June 2016, was almost immediately dubbed a “terrorist.” But did the men and women who frantically sought cover from the hail of bullets at the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival feel less terror than those who were trapped in the Pulse nightclub? Do families who lost loved ones in Las Vegas grieve any less than those who did in Orlando?

Of course, it can be argued that terrorism is not just about inducing fear and inflicting violence, but doing these things in the service of a greater political cause. Mateen was said to have pledged allegiance to ISIS on a 911 call during the shooting, whereas Paddock’s motives remain, as of this writing, unknown. “Right now,” said Sheriff Joe Lombardo of Clark County, Nevada, “we believe it’s a sole actor, [a] lone-wolf-type actor.”

Notice that the emphasis on the solitary nature of the act encourages us to think of it as unavoidable: We are supposed to accept that mass shootings can happen because no one can predict when an armed man will “snap” and go on a shooting spree. Bill O’Reilly, the former Fox News personality, made this argument in a blog post the day after the shooting. “This is the price of freedom,”

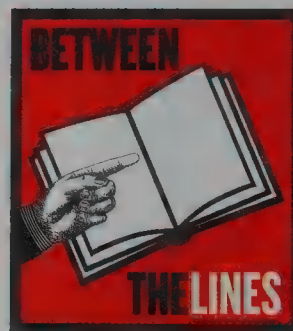
he wrote. “Violent nuts are allowed to roam free until they do damage, no matter how threatening they are.”

Yet when it comes to terrorism, we are repeatedly told that every effort will be made to keep us safe, whatever the cost to our rule of law or sense of morality. Days after the terrorist attack by Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik in San Bernardino, California, for example, Donald Trump, then still a presidential candidate, called for “a complete and total shutdown of Muslims entering the United States.” Last summer, after Mateen opened fire in a gay nightclub, Trump gloated that he “appreciated the congrats for being right on Islamic terrorism.”

At the same time, Trump remains conspicuously silent when the attacker is a white man. When Jeremy Joseph Christian killed two people in Portland, Oregon, who had objected to his anti-Muslim rant on a Metropolitan Area Express light-rail car, Trump didn’t suggest banning

white men from trains. Instead, he spent the weekend tweeting about the Russia investigation and leaks from the White House. Likewise, the neo-Nazis and white nationalists who marched through Charlottesville, Virginia, this past summer and killed a young counterprotester did not attract Trump’s ire. There were “some very fine people on both sides,” he said. And all Trump could manage about the massacre in Las Vegas, reportedly the deadliest mass shooting in modern American history, was that Paddock was a “sick” and “demented” man.

It’s tempting to dismiss these reactions as distinctly Trumpian, but I fear that Trump is merely saying out loud what remains politely unspoken in the culture. The United States doesn’t talk about mass shootings in the same way that it talks about terrorist attacks. One type of violence is viewed as unavoidable, the other as preventable. One requires



We are supposed to accept that mass shootings can happen because no one can predict when an armed man will snap.

no change in our laws; the other does—up to and including no-fly lists, religious bans, and mass surveillance. One results in no discomfort for the white people who happen to share the race or faith of the shooter; the other culminates in the treatment of brown and black people as criminals-in-waiting.

If you think I'm exaggerating, consider the language that the National Rifle Association uses in framing the debate about gun control. Guns cannot be legislated, we are told, because this would simply deprive "law-abiding citizens" of their constitutional rights while "criminals" continue to arm themselves illegally. This is a position that only makes sense if you believe that criminals are always born, never made. The NRA and its supporters treat the categories of "criminal" and "law-abiding" as inflexible and inherent. That is the language of race.

But how much would the national conversation about

guns change if people of color suddenly decided to arm themselves en masse? There is no need to wonder, because it already happened once, in California. In the 1960s, members of the Black Panther Party legally purchased firearms and conducted armed patrols and "cop watching" in Oakland. The movement so alarmed legislators that they crafted the Mulford Act, which prohibited the public carrying of loaded weapons in California.

We all know the script: When a mass shooting happens, we feel horror at the number of casualties, engage in speculation about the suspect, hear our leaders offer their "thoughts and prayers," watch the NRA's Twitter feed go quiet for a few days. What we can hardly claim anymore is shock that the shooting happened. Not only did it happen, but it will happen again and again and again until we do something about it. And that can only begin with a frank reckoning of how white supremacy enables and maintains our current gun laws. ■

When it comes to terrorism, we are repeatedly told that every effort will be made to keep us safe, whatever the cost.

SNAPSHOT / RAMON ESPINOSA

Home Alone

Roberto Figueroa Caballero sits on a small table in what's left of his home in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on October 5, 2017. Figueroa said that he had wanted to stay put with his dog during Hurricane Maria but was evicted by

police and forced into a shelter for the storm's duration. When Figueroa returned, he placed his salvageable items back in their original locations, as if his home still had walls; he explained that it calmed him to do so.



The Nation.



SPECIAL ISSUE

THE FUTURE

Setting the table for

OF FOOD

the next generation

IT'S A TIME OF DEEP UNCERTAINTY AT EVERY LINK IN the global food chain. For the first time in a decade, the number of hungry and malnourished people in the world is rising. Climate change threatens breadbasket regions the world over. Nestlé and other multinational food companies peddle processed foods deeper into remote areas of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, igniting debate about whether they're feeding hungry communities or making them sick. The malnutrition of the future, as predicted by a recent *New York Times* report, is to be "both overweight and undernourished."

Meanwhile, the corporations that produce seeds, process meat, and sell the final products back to us gobble each other up (see page 39). With antitrust regulators asleep on the job, extreme consolidation across the agriculture sector means farmers pay more for inputs like seeds and earn less for their own products. And as companies like Monsanto get bigger, so does their political clout (page 34).

Our social and political anxieties spill over at the dinner table. Cities in Italy and France flirt with bans on street food made primarily by migrants. Right-wing nationalists in India have weaponized a taboo against eating beef (page 32). Our current president eats a taco bowl to communicate his "love" for Hispanics and then, months later, oversees a crackdown on the immigrants who grow, pick, cook, and serve America's food.

To say that the future of food will be high-tech tells us little about the values of the food system we're building for future generations (page 23). Will targeted genome-editing tools like CRISPR lead to hardier, more nutritious plants, or will they enrich agrochemical corporations at the expense of farmers and the environment? Consider the food-tech start-up Juicero, maker of a \$400 machine to cold-press fresh produce packets available by delivery—an idea that greatly excited investors, until someone discovered that you could simply squeeze the packets by hand. In the dystopian future foreshadowed by Juicero, the wealthy will pay, via one-click ordering, for expensive and unnecessary gadgets to prepare and deliver their food, while those without money will eat... cake?

But other projects and innovations point to a different kind of future, creating crops that regenerate the soil they're grown in (page 18) and worker organizations that fight exploitation right down the supply chain. Sapped rural economies will become regional food hubs (page 28). The rituals of cooking and eating will draw communities closer together (page 24).

So how do we get to a more equitable and sustainable food system? That's the question we asked our forum participants, who offer their answers in the following pages.

—Zoë Carpenter

Anna Lappé, a founder of the Small Planet Institute and director of Real Food Media, served as guest editor for this issue.

THE OTHER NRA

BY SARU JAYARAMAN

A S RESTAURANT-WORKER ORGANIZERS, WE'VE been pushing back for many years against the outsized power of the National Restaurant Association, what we call "the other NRA." This NRA has lobbied successfully to keep the minimum wage for tipped workers at \$2.13 an hour. This wage is a legacy of slavery; after Emancipation, the restaurant industry of the post-Civil War era lobbied to hire newly freed slaves, pay them literally nothing, and force them to live on customer tips. The wage has increased from \$0 to \$2.13 over the last century. This ridiculously low minimum wage is the reason that the restaurant industry, with over 14 million workers, remains the lowest-paying sector of the US economy despite being one of the fastest-growing. Moreover, more than two-thirds of tipped workers are women. Female tipped workers suffer from economic instability and must tolerate sexual harassment from customers in order to feed their families on their tips. After the 2016 election, many news reports featured interviews with frustrated and disillusioned restaurant workers who had voted for Donald Trump; many more millions of restaurant workers did not vote at all.

We've been pushing back against the other NRA through One Fair Wage, our campaign to raise the minimum wage and to eliminate altogether the scandalously low minimum wage for tipped workers. We were able to work with supportive restaurant owners like Danny Meyer, leading to hundreds of restaurants following suit. We've had victories like passing One Fair Wage legislation in Maine and in cities like Flagstaff, Arizona. But with every victory, the NRA has poured millions more dollars into maintaining the status quo.

The NRA has partnered with Trump's Labor Department to propose a new rule that would allow restaurant owners to legally take workers' tips away from them if they pay them a full minimum wage. This proposal would overturn 80 years of regulation ensuring that tips belong to the workers they're given to, and would personally benefit Trump by allowing his own restaurants to legally steal their employees' tips.

This outrageous proposal presents the opportunity to mobilize thousands of workers, employers, and consumers—pretty much anyone who believes that tips belong to workers—and then move these thousands (including those who voted for Trump) to fight for what we really need, which is One Fair Wage. There have been several moments in history in which the corporate kleptocracy went too far, resulting in social movements that won transformative change. The Trump era could prove to be one of those moments.

With over 14 million workers, the restaurant industry is one of the fastest-growing in the country.



TWITTER / SEKOU LUKE

Saru Jayaraman is co-founder and co-director of the Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) United and director of the Food Labor Research Center at the University of California, Berkeley.

THE PROBLEMS WITH FAIR TRADE

BY RAJ PATEL

TRUE EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY CAN only be attained when we recognize where inequity and unsustainability come from. Consider something as simple as a banana. In the banana industry, workers are treated poorly: They're exposed to dangerous pesticides and toil for low and uncertain wages. Fair-trade organic bananas offer a solution to this: no more pesticides (organic bananas!) and better pay for farmers.

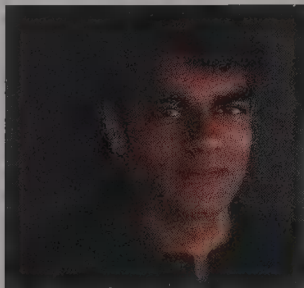
But a fair-trade label on bananas guarantees neither equity nor sustainability. Even when consumers pay more for the promise that farmers are getting a better-than-market price, the evidence of positive outcomes remains mixed. Fair trade only sometimes raises farmers' incomes—and for migrant workers, protections are rare. Also, there is some evidence that fair trade deepens household gender inequality when farm families specialize in the cultivation of export-driven cash crops.

Most important, fair trade takes for granted that Latin America, the Caribbean, and other parts of the Global South ought to task themselves in perpetuity with growing our bananas. Fair trade doesn't force us to confront how these countries became America's fruit bowl.

For instance, more than one in three bananas on US store shelves come from Guatemala. When Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz tried in 1952 to inaugurate land reform for dispossessed peasants, the United Fruit Company was so concerned that it called its friends in the CIA, which initiated a coup that led to a 36-year civil war in which 200,000 people died—most at the hands of the brutal military and security services—and for which President Bill Clinton apologized in 1999. Nor was Guatemala the only case: The term “banana republic” was originally coined to describe Honduras and its neighbors, sovereign states dominated by American companies like United Fruit, backed by US military force.

Equity and sustainability demand more than a mere apology. Guatemala is among the world's top 10 countries for long-term vulnerability to climate change, its economy battered by extreme weather, its coastline redrawn by rising seas. For true equity, the United States needs to recognize its debt with reparations—reparations for the many ways we continue to benefit from past horrors in the food system, both here and abroad.

There's no magic number that we in the United States can put on this, no sufficient check to write. But surely it's better to recognize how far back in time we need to go to accept responsibility for our actions, how deep that debt runs, and how inequity and unsustainability continue to mount under capitalism. To evade this long, hard reckoning is to ask for a very attenuated kind of equity and sustainability—the kind whose demands can be shrunk to fit on a label.



Raj Patel is an award-winning writer, activist, and academic. He is a research professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

For true trade equity, the United States needs to pay reparations.



Lindsey Shute is co-founder and executive director of the National Young Farmers Coalition.

THE NEW FACE OF FAMILY FARMS

BY LINDSEY SHUTE

IF YOU WANT TO DISRUPT THE AUTO INDUSTRY, you'd better have a few billion dollars: Mom-and-pop automakers are unlikely to outflank the Big Three. But in agriculture, small operators can outdo the major players. By connecting directly with customers, and by responding nimbly to changes in the markets as well as in their ecosystems, small farmers can keep one step ahead of the big guys. As the co-founder of the National Young Farmers Coalition and a family farmer myself, I have a front-row seat to the innovations among small farmers that are transforming the industry.

For example, take the Quick Cut Greens Harvester, a tool developed just a couple of years ago by a young farmer, Jonathan Dysinger, in Tennessee, with a small loan from a local Slow Money group. It enables small-scale farmers to harvest 175 pounds of greens per hour—a huge improvement over harvesting just a few dozen pounds by hand—suddenly putting the little guys in contention with the mega-farms of California. Before the tool came out, small farmers couldn't touch the price per pound offered by California farms. But now, with the combination of a better price point and a generally fresher product, they can stay in business.

The sustained success of small farmers, though, won't happen without fundamental changes to the industry. One crucial factor is secure access to land. Competition from investors, developers, and established large farmers makes owning one's own land unattainable for many aspiring new farmers. From 2004 to 2013, agricultural real-estate values doubled, and they continue to rise in many regions.

Another challenge for more than a million of the most qualified farmworkers and managers is a nonexistent path to citizenship—the ultimate barrier to building a farm of their own. With farm operators over the age of 65 outnumbering farmers younger than 35 by a margin of six to one, and with two-thirds of the nation's farmland in need of a new farmer, we must clear the path for talented people willing to grow the nation's food.

There are solutions that could light a path toward a more sustainable and equitable farm economy, but farmers can't cobble them together in our barns. We at the National Young Farmers Coalition need broad support as we urge Congress to scale up farmland conservation, as we push for immigration reform, and as we pursue policies that will ensure the success of a diverse and entrepreneurial next generation of farmers from all backgrounds. With a new farm bill on the horizon in Congress, consumers must take a stand with young farmers.

BUILDING A SMALL-SCALE FARMING REVOLUTION

BY JOHN W. BOYD JR.

AS CLIMATE CHANGE CONTINUES TO DISRUPT American life, we must pay attention to its effects on our food system and the farmers who support it. Special consideration is due to black farmers, who have endured greater burdens working the land, from slavery and sharecropping to discrimination and the fight for occupational justice. As a fourth-generation black farmer and activist, I strive to keep up with US Department of Agriculture updates on climate change. This issue has never been more relevant. Recent hurricanes like Harvey and Irma have demonstrated that we are not prepared for the effects of extreme weather events on farming. For many years on my Virginia farm, I had my corn crop in the ground by the end of March. But for a decade, my spring planting has been pushed back because of changes in the weather patterns. Nowadays, I find myself planting corn in May. To create an equitable, sustainable future for food access, we have to build a small-scale farming revolution.

Given our centuries of expertise, black farmers are especially needed. Farming is our oldest occupation. In freedom, we treasured having land to work for ourselves, for our families, and for racial progress. "Forty acres and a mule" was a persistent aspiration. The average black-owned farm at the end of the 19th century was 50 acres. Nearly every black farmer had a mule—two if they were lucky. My grandfather, Thomas Boyd, owned a team of mules to provide labor and transportation. He had a piece of ground to work. Those were his family's security.

In my 30-plus years of advocacy, I have seen a crisis grow among white farmers and black farmers alike. But black farmers have it harder because we never gained equal means to fight off corporate domination. In a \$1.25 billion settlement in 2010, the courts acknowledged that for decades, white male farmers were given preferential treatment in farm lending, loan servicing, and subsidies. Corporate farming has also taken the freedom out of farming. Huge companies like Monsanto and Bayer promote the use of genetically modified seeds. Farmers can no longer use the seeds from their crops to plant for next year.

Even as we strive to encourage a new generation to take up farming, time is against us; the average black farmer today is 62 years old. Meanwhile, the mega-agriculture companies may not be able to maintain food delivery during climate-change disasters. And we need more organic farmers producing healthy crops to feed America. Farming is hard work, but it is also a rewarding occupation. You may not need a doctor or lawyer every day, but every day you do eat food grown by farmers like us.

John W. Boyd Jr. is a fourth-generation black farmer, businessman, and civil-rights activist. He is the founder and president of the nonprofit National Black Farmers Association.



Extreme weather is transforming farming.

Dana Perls is the senior food and technology campaigner with Friends of the Earth.



THE NEXT GENERATION OF GMOs

BY DANA PERLS

NEW GENETIC-ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGIES like CRISPR are being sensationalized as "silver bullets" to address food-system challenges, from pollution to hunger. Similar promises were made about the first generation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture. Unfortunately, among other problems, most of these GMO crops led to massive increases in the use of toxic herbicides like glyphosate, a probable carcinogen. Before we embrace the next generation of GMOs, we need to understand their health, environmental, and social-justice effects. Unfortunately, the synthetic-biology industry is racing forward, fueled by hype and venture capital, with little regard for the possible consequences.

Food products made with new GMO techniques include the meatless Impossible Burger, the GMO Arctic Apple, and vanilla flavoring derived from genetically engineered yeast. Some of these products are rapidly making their way onto our plates ahead of full safety assessments, regulations, and proper labeling (indeed, many of them are being marketed as "sustainable"). But the early evidence suggests that they may contribute more problems than solutions.

Consider the Impossible Burger. FDA documents revealed that its key ingredient—the genetically engineered "heme" protein, which turns the burger red—may be an allergen, and also that there were 46 unexpected and unassessed proteins found in the product. The FDA stated that the studies submitted by Impossible Foods "do not establish the safety" of its product—and yet the company continues to sell these burgers across the country.

Evolva's vanillin, from genetically engineered yeast fed with sugar and raised in vats, is being marketed as "natural and sustainable." Evolva can do this because the term "natural" is legally undefined, allowing its product to compete with truly natural, plant-based vanilla, sustainably grown by 200,000 small farmers in rain forests in the Global South. As Alejandrino Garcia Castaño, a third-generation Mexican vanilla farmer, argues: "To put a 'natural' label on synthetic-biology products is a dishonest act"—one that "will hurt small-scale farmers who cultivate the real plant, while caring for real people and real forests."

We are at a crossroads in the food system, and the direction we choose to take will have ripple effects far into the future. Do we want our food produced with risky, unregulated, patented, genetically engineered fungi or algae, fed with environmentally destructive feedstocks like GMO corn, and controlled by a handful of mega-corporations? Instead of investing in potential problems masquerading as solutions, shouldn't we invest in the transparent, organic, humane, and socially just production of real food in a way that benefits farmers, food-chain workers, consumers, animals, and the environment? ■

HACKING THE GRAIN

For decades, scientists have sought a grain with the taste of a cereal but the habits of a prairie grass. Kernza might be their answer.

BY MADELINE OSTRANDER



The Miller:
Steve Horton, head miller and baker at Baker's Field in Minneapolis, holds wheat kernels in his right hand and Kernza in his left.



IN AN AUGUST MORNING IN MINNEAPOLIS, I SAT AT A wooden table inside the Birchwood Cafe, a bright, cheerful restaurant a few blocks from the Mississippi River waterfront, tasting an éclair as attentively as I could. The flavor I wanted to detect was partly obscured by more conspicuous ingredients: a high-pitched, jammy blueberry glaze painted across the top of the pastry, and the sweet song of a yellow corn custard. But beneath that, there was a subtle and earthy background note: the grain. The pastry was made in part from wheat flour, but you could detect another ingredient as well—something that tasted like nuts and crackers, coffee and grass. That flavor came from Kernza, a grain almost entirely unknown to the human diet until a few years ago, when the Birchwood became one of the first places in the country to serve it, and the first to list it on the menu.

Tracy Singleton, the café's owner, likes getting people, including herself, to try new and improbable things. More than two decades ago, when she was in her early 30s, she inherited about \$10,000 from her grandfather, quit her waitress job, took out a loan, and launched the Birchwood. Her café grew into one of the city's best-known institutions, a place for Midwest-grown ingredients both gourmet and unpretentious. "We've been telling farm-to-table stories before people were using the term 'farm to table,'" she told me.

So she was undaunted when Helene Murray, an agronomist at the University of Minnesota, asked, in early 2013, if she wanted to try serving up Kernza, even though no one in the kitchen knew exactly what to do with it. "It was like, 'Wow, this a pretty big honor,'" Singleton recalled. "Yeah, we'll put it in some food and we'll talk about it." About two weeks later, Murray parked her car next to the Birchwood, and she and Singleton hoisted a 50-pound bag of the new grain out of the trunk and through the café's front door.

Kernza is sometimes called a "perennial wheat." Birchwood has touted it as "the wheat of the future." But it's a separate species. Chestnut-colored, skinnier, and more irregular in size than wheat berries, Kernza yields a little under a third as much in the field as conventional wheat. But it has one major advantage over the grain that helped launch human civilization: a long life span. Wheat is an annual; it dies every year after it sets seeds, and farmers have to replant it again and again. Kernza lives on, season after season.

The word "grain" has many definitions, but it commonly refers to any plant that humans eat and that's also part of the botani-

cal family of grasses. Three grains provide about half of the world's calories: corn, wheat, and rice (the only one of the three that is occasionally cultivated as a perennial in the tropics). In the United States, about 46 million acres of land are covered with wheat and 91 million with corn, a combined area bigger than New Mexico. Mostly, these grains are planted in monoculture—one variety to a huge field—and cultivated with the help of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides, as well as the kind of precision and efficiency you'd expect on a factory floor. This method of farming has made it possible to cheaply produce food calories for hundreds of millions of people; raise vast populations of cattle, pigs, and chickens; and develop enormous markets for other grain-based products, including ethanol. (About 40 percent of American-grown corn in 2016 was turned into ethanol; 37 percent was used to fatten livestock or ended up damaged or miscounted; and a minuscule fraction entered the human diet, mostly as corn syrup.)

But these farming methods also entail major sacrifices. Growing grain this way requires huge amounts of fossil fuel to power farm machinery and to make synthetic nitrogen fertilizer (accounting for as much as 3 percent of the world's carbon emissions). And every time you till and replant, you loosen and tear up the topsoil. As a result, millions of tons of soil erode into the nation's waterways every year, carrying pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers with them, contributing to a "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico, and polluting waterways all over the Midwest.

While Kernza has the taste of a cereal, it has the habits of a prairie grass. It sinks 15-foot-long roots into the soil and banks nutrients and carbon as organic matter. It produces edible grain for five years, during which time it requires little or no tilling and less fertilizer than wheat does. To create and grow such a grain has been the dream of a group of scientists and sustainable-food advocates for four decades. According to its proponents, if Kernza succeeds as food, it could be the start of a revolution to save soil and fight climate change. But until recently, perennial crops seemed like an unimaginably distant prospect, requiring many generations of crossing and recrossing to arrive at anything that would function at the scale of modern agriculture. Then, a few years ago, Kernza breeding trials at the Land Institute in Kansas and the University of Minnesota began to make rapid progress, and the research caught the eye of big companies like the Minneapolis-based General Mills and Patagonia, which has a food division called Patagonia Provisions.

To make Kernza palatable to such corporations, the researchers needed trailblazers—people who understood the business of food and would try running Kernza from the farm, through the mill, into the kitchen, and onto the plate. Singleton likes a good story, and she found the tale of Kernza captivating. If there was going to be a movement to revolutionize food, she wanted to be a part of it.

"I talk about an intensive tillage event as the combination of a tornado, a hurricane, an earthquake, a tsunami."

—Don Reicosky, retired Department of Agriculture soil scientist



The Pioneer: Restaurateur Tracy Singleton jumped at the chance to put Kernza on her menu.

Madeline Ostrander is a Seattle-based freelance writer.

MADLINE OSTRANDER (2)

THE 12,000-YEAR HISTORY OF GRAIN AGRICULTURE IS ESSENTIALLY a long-running set of experiments to turn grass into something that humans could reliably harvest and eat. Humanity's first crops—including barley and two varieties of wheat called emmer and einkorn—started, of course, as wild plants. Hunter-gatherers probably sought those plants for their fat, nutritious seeds. Around 10,000 BC, humans began to cultivate them, and the abundant calories those plants produce made it possible for civilization to flower in the Middle East's Fertile Crescent. But in choosing to cultivate and breed those seeds, the first farmers committed human society to a long dependence on the annual grain, a crop that dies at the end of each season and is born again the next from new seed. In order to germinate successfully every year, the seeds of annuals need free space on the ground, away from predators and competing weeds. For centuries, the primary means of creating that space has been tillage: churning the soil until it's mostly bare, first by hand or with tools, then with animal-drawn plows, and more recently with heavy machinery like tillers and cultivators.

Across a large area, the results of plowing and tilling can be disastrous, as became clear in the United States in the 1930s, when drought turned the heavily plowed soils of the Great Plains into the nightmare known as the Dust Bowl. From that decade forward, the US government vigorously promoted soil-conservation measures, including methods like windbreaks. Annual erosion rates have dropped decade after decade, but the United States still loses soil 10 times faster than nature can replace it.

More recently, scientists have also discovered that activities that churn up the soil, especially tilling, play a role in climate change. Soil holds nutrients, minerals, and carbon, bound up into organic matter by the various tiny animals, fungi, and microorganisms that inhabit it. When you churn it up, some of that soil carbon breaks down and escapes into the atmosphere, adding to the load of carbon dioxide that is now altering the planet. One recent study estimated that agriculture, over the millennia, has contributed about 133 billion metric tons of carbon to the planet's atmosphere. "I talk about an intensive tillage event as the combination of a tornado, a hurricane, an earthquake, a tsunami," says Don Reicosky, a retired US Department of Agriculture soil scientist.

Over the millennia, agriculture has contributed about 133 billion metric tons of carbon to the atmosphere.

The Researchers: University of Minnesota plant scientists Jacob Jungers (left) and Prabin Bajgain stand in a test plot of Kernza.

"There's a big burp of carbon dioxide that goes out with that." In the last few decades, people like Reicosky have urged farmers to cut back on the wasting of soil and the dumping of carbon through a method called "no-till," which involves planting seeds beneath the remains of the previous season's crops. But no-till farmers often turn to herbicides to keep the weeds down.

If more of the world's daily bread came from perennials instead of annuals, there would be less need to clear a path for seedlings every season. Perennial farming could build the soil year by year instead of tearing it apart. Starting as early as the 1920s, both American and Russian scientists tested a few lines of perennial wheat, hoping to save farmers the cost of replanting new seed every year. But the dream of a perennial grain revolution didn't gather momentum until 50 years later. In 1977, Wes Jackson, co-founder of an agricultural-research organization called the Land Institute, was strolling through the Konza Prairie Biological Station in northeast Kansas—several thousand acres of grassland that look much like the Great Plains did before they were plowed up for agriculture. Jackson had just read a report from the US comptroller general showing that more than five tons of topsoil per acre were eroding from the average grain farm annually. And he wondered: Why couldn't a farm look more like this prairie, with a motley collection of annuals and perennials growing side by side? The prairie didn't need to be replanted year after year, and no one needed to till the soil to get the grasses to grow. But to make a farm modeled on a prairie, with food plants instead of wild ones, you'd have to rewrite agriculture basically from scratch. Jackson believed that his vision was possible, but he imagined it would take 50 to 100 years of plant breeding—ambitious when you consider how many millennia it took to create the grains we have now.

In the early 1980s, Jackson persuaded Robert Rodale (son of J.I. Rodale, founder of the Rodale Institute, one of the oldest organic-farming organizations in the country) to search for a perennial that could substitute for wheat. The Rodale Institute rooted through seed banks and tested nearly 100 candidates gathered from around the world, before landing on a species called *Thinopyrum intermedium*, a wheatgrass first collected from Turkey and Afghanistan. Relative to other wild grasses, this one had seeds of a decent size and shape—not shrunken, discolored, or bristling with the needle-like awns that can make grasses hard to harvest and thresh. And there was some evidence that it may have been eaten by humans several millennia ago.

The breeding experiments proceeded on a small scale until 2001, when Lee DeHaan joined the Land Institute's staff. He had been an admirer of Jackson's since his teen years, when his father, a farmer, heard the scientist give a talk in Minnesota. After that, Lee wanted nothing more than to devote his career to perennial agriculture. In 2003, he launched a large-scale program at the Land Institute to convert *T. intermedium* into a functioning grain crop called Kernza, a play on the name Konza. It was the same year that the Human Genome Project was completed. Kernza's DNA has never been genetically engineered; its genes get reshuffled via the scatter-



ing of pollen, from the male parts of flowers onto the feathery, sticky female parts. But advances in genomics—the sequencing of DNA—over the last 15 years have made it far easier to tweak Kernza. Almost all of the grain's genome has now been mapped. Once breeders have a genetic blueprint, they can track down the genes that control particular traits and select individuals with genetic stock that codes for, say, fat seeds or resistance to disease. In the last decade, Kernza's potential yield has gone up by 10 percent annually. In 2011, the Land Institute began collaborating with the University of Minnesota to research the grain. Kernza has since become a major initiative at the university, spanning several academic departments, including plant genetics, agronomy, and food science.

This year, General Mills offered the university half a million dollars to study several aspects of Kernza, including how it might help store carbon and organic matter in the soil. The company wants to reach what it calls "sustainable emission levels" by 2050 and hopes that Kernza will be part of the means to get there. Meanwhile, the Land Institute, the University of Minnesota, and their partners are trying to hammer out other varieties of perennial crops: a rice being tested in China, an oilseed akin to canola, a flaxseed native to North America. And a small number of research programs into perennials have been started around the world. The Bread Lab, a program of Washington State University, has been developing its own version of a wheatlike perennial called Salish Blue. The result of a 20-year effort to cross annual wheat with perennial wheatgrass, Salish Blue lives for about two years, and farmers in northwest Washington are now beginning to grow it in their fields.

About four miles northeast of the Birchwood Cafe, you can find Kernza in an ongoing state of metamorphosis, in test plots at the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Experiment Station. When I visit the plots, it's a clear blue afternoon at the end of the summer growing season, when corn ears are heavy with ripe kernels. The Kernza is congregated in a half-acre plot amid a patchwork of experimental fields of corn and soybeans. In comparison with its neighbors, the Kernza looks rangy and feral, with stems at various heights and leaning at odd angles. But up close, it's a handsome plant: golden-headed, with bluish-green stems gathered in bunches like a prairie grass, and sprinting to four or five feet tall.

Prabin Bajgain, a university plant geneticist, and his colleague, Jacob Jungers, an agronomist, lead me into the center of the field, where I notice that half of the bunches have had their spikes lopped off, and a few of these are streaked with orange paint. The paint marks the winners, those that have been weighed and measured for seed size and yield and could be used to develop future batches of Kernza. In August, Bajgain took seeds from about 900 plants back to the lab, selected the best ones, and plotted out pieces of their genetic code. This analysis helps the breeders put together a set of statistical predictions about which plants will be the hardiest and best-yielding in order to narrow down the choice of which ones to replant the following year.

Every year, the transformation of Kernza seems stunningly fast, at least on the slow time scales that plant breeders are accustomed to. Since 2001, the potential size of a Kernza seed has doubled, and scientists hope to lengthen its productive lifespan from five to 10 years. Jungers plucks a spikelet from the grass head, peels a few of the kernels out of their husks, and holds them out in his palm. They are nearly as big as grains of rice, although I've seen some about the size of caraway seeds.

Then, in a sudden gesture, Bajgain leans forward and flings his

Do I look like your mother?

Cow's milk is for calves. Dump dairy. Go vegan.



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PETA

hands up and along the stems in one of the bunches. When his fingers hit the spikes at the top, a few grain flowers leap into the air in a delicate cascade. But most of the spikelets cling to the stem. This is one of the markers of a domesticated plant: Instead of casting its seeds to the wind, it waits for a human hand or a combine to strip the grain from the plant. Just two years ago, Kernza grains were flighty. “You could touch them, you shake them; they just dropped,” Bajgain says. “But these, you go like this”—swiping his hand over another stalk, which barely sheds any seeds at all—“and, man, it’s so nice.”

TO DATE, THE BEST-KNOWN ENDEAVOR TO REIMAGINE FARMING has been the organic-food movement. Every year, organic agriculture branches further into the fruits and vegetables market, but it has made far fewer inroads into the market for grains. Produce accounts for 43 percent of organic sales, bread and grains just 9 percent. Making farming more sustainable is a more complicated endeavor for grain farmers—whose product interacts with a complex supply chain before reaching consumers—than it is for fruit and vegetable farmers, who can reach consumers with organic produce directly at farmers’ markets and grocery stores. Kernza, which, like all plants, can be grown organically or conventionally, represents a different approach to sustainable farming. But to make it work, you must navigate a far-reaching system of milling, processing, fermenting, and baking.

The role of the Birchwood Cafe, as tester and trailblazer, was to run Kernza through a supply chain—literally from farm to table—and find the obstacles along the way. These became apparent from the first moment. For one thing, the kernels are too small to grind into flour with a conventional mill. The first batch to reach Birchwood in 2013 hadn’t been milled, so the chefs tried tossing the whole grain, cooked, into salads and pancake batter. Customers devoured the results. The university sent the next batch to a farmer in Wisconsin who owned a specialized mill attached to a bicycle; he pedaled many pounds of Kernza into flour, and the Birchwood chefs tried it in bread and pastries. Kernza is lower in the gluten that makes wheat dough flexible enough to rise; substitute it for wheat in a bread recipe and you could end up with something about as dense and unappealing as cardboard. But the chefs played with the moisture content of the dough, teasing out an appropriate texture.

The supply of Kernza has been inconsistent: In Minnesota, only a handful of farmers near the Canadian border grow it. The restaurant has run out for weeks at a time. Despite all this, enthusiasm for Kernza is on the rise. Customers often ask the Birchwood staff where they can buy their own bags of grain or flour, though Kernza is not yet available to the public in either form.

Meanwhile, the university has given several other local food vendors the chance to experiment with the new grain. A local microbrewery called Bang now makes a Kernza

beer named Gold. This past summer, a Minneapolis pasta company called Dumpling & Strand sold Kernza noodles at a farmers’ market. Elsewhere in the country, a San Francisco restaurant aptly named the Perennial serves a bread made with the new grain, and a baker in New York has concocted a 75 percent Kernza loaf. Some major companies are also ready to take the leap. A year ago, Patagonia Provisions and the Hopworks Urban Brewery released a beer called Long Root Ale, brewed in Portland and available in some Whole Foods stores.

Last year, a small artisan mill called Baker’s Field Flour and Bread opened in the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District. It now supplies Kernza flour to Minnesota businesses turning it into food. Last fall, General Mills asked Steve Horton, the owner of Baker’s Field, to mill 250 pounds of it. “I tried it in almost every product that we make that

uses flour,” says Laura Hansen, the company’s senior principal scientist. General Mills plans to launch a “ready-to-eat cereal” made from Kernza in the next year, as part of its Cascadian Farm Organic line.

If General Mills moves ahead with Kernza, contracting farmers to grow a steady supply of it, that will change the game. But none of the small food businesses I spoke with were worried about the big food company’s involvement—not even Horton, who admitted that his operations were too small for him to continue as the go-to Kernza miller. “We

need agribusiness to be involved,” he said, if Kernza is ever going to succeed.

A day after I visited Birchwood, I followed the trail of the Kernza éclair to the Minnesota State Fair, one of the largest such events in the nation. The éclair was one of the fair’s featured foods this year, and it had sold out every day so far. Inside the fair’s Agriculture Horticulture building was a booth for Forever Green, a University of Minnesota program promoting perennial agriculture. Don Wyse, a bearded, white-haired professor of natural resources, stood beside several sheaves of Kernza stems, each the size of a pillar. “Organic hasn’t changed the Midwest much,” Wyse told me. “Vegetables don’t cover millions of acres. We have to look at those things that cover millions of acres.”

For years, a segment of the food movement has clung to a nostalgic view—back to the land, back to heirloom varieties—while some sustainable-food advocates have distanced themselves from the conventional grain farming that ranges across the Great Plains and the Midwest. But in a time of climate change, it’s possible that farming needs a different kind of makeover, bearing in mind the realities of Big Agriculture and the humble grains that power most of the farming sector.

Several millennia ago, wheat changed the course of civilization. Perhaps it’s time for another rewrite. ■



The Vanguard: The Birchwood Cafe in Minneapolis was the first place in the country to put Kernza on the menu.

“Organic hasn’t changed the Midwest much. Vegetables don’t cover millions of acres. We have to look at things that do.”

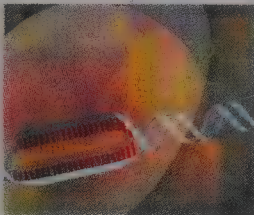
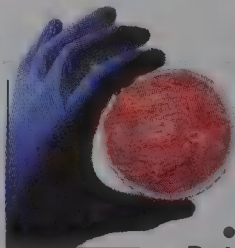
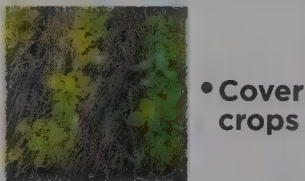
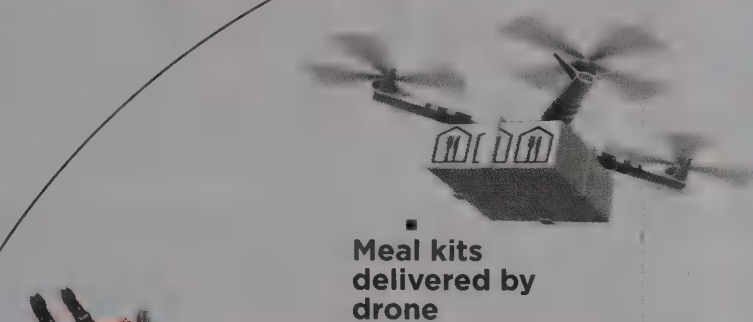
—Don Wyse, University of Minnesota professor of natural resources

OUR GUIDE TO

THE FUTURE OF FOOD

What is Silicon Valley doing to your dinner?

Delicious



Disgusting

Doomed

Brilliant

WHAT IS THE RECIPE FOR HOME?

At a refugee camp in Greece, displaced Syrians form unlikely bonds in the kitchen.

BY DALIA MORTADA

THE FUTURE OF FOOD

AS I WEAVED THROUGH THE ALLEYS OF RITSONA, A REFUGEE camp set up on an abandoned Greek Air Force base on a mountain north of Athens, I let my nose guide me. The air was filled with the scent of roasting meat. Smoke wafted through the rows of white, single-room container homes. At last I reached the source: a makeshift grill pit at the end of an alley, surrounded by men squatting to tend the fire.

"We're making *shish taouk*," explained the Syrian man I came to know as Abu Shadi. "Or at least our version of it." (In Syria, as in much of the Middle East, people go by a moniker beginning with "Abu" or "Umm"—"father of" and "mother of," respectively—followed by the name of their first-born son or son-to-be. Most of the people in this story will be referred to by those monikers.)

Shish taouk, a popular Levantine dish of cubed chicken marinated in yogurt, garlic, lemon, and an assortment of spices that differs depending on the region, is usually skewered like a kebab and grilled over an open flame. "We don't have skewers or all the spices we need for it, but we make do," Abu Shadi said. They didn't have a grill, tongs, or spatulas, either, so they used a fork or darted their bare hands into the flames to flip the chicken over, quickly dropping each piece onto a flat grill grate raised on bricks.

Abu Shadi and his wife, Umm Shadi, lived on the outskirts of Damascus until 2012, when the fighting forced them out; they joined 6 million other Syrians who'd been internally displaced by the civil war. They eventually made it to Abu Shadi's home village of Quneitra, near the Israeli border in Syria's southwest, before finally fleeing Syria altogether with their children in 2016. It took 45 days to cross Syria by land; the family walked through the desert and spent thousands of dollars on smugglers to get them to Turkey and, eventually, to Greece. "This little one," Abu Shadi said, pointing to his feisty toddler, Jana, who has her father's olive skin and her mother's ear-to-

ear smile, "didn't cry a peep the whole way." By March of 2016, they'd joined the 5 million Syrians—a quarter of the population—who were now living outside Syria's borders.

Abu Shadi rattled off the cities of origin for the others seated around the plastic dining table: Abu and Umm Ibrahim from Idlib in the northwest, near the Turkish border; Abu and Umm Farouk from Latakia, a coastal province. From a Kurdish family in the region of Al Hasakah, on the northeast border with Iraq, came Alan Mohammad, who uses a wheelchair due to muscular dystrophy; Salah and Linda hailed from a Kurdish town in Aleppo province. There were also Abu and Umm Raed, from Daraa, the city known for sparking the revolution, and a group of single men in their teens and early 20s from a Palestinian-refugee camp in Damascus.

These families would never have crossed paths in Syria. It wasn't just geography that separated them, but also their educational, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Generally speaking, Kurds and Arabs wouldn't share a meal back home. But as the refugees gathered around the dining table at Ritsona, passing platters of *shish taouk* and *fatteh*—a sort of casserole of fried pita bread topped with chickpeas and a garlic-tahini-yogurt sauce—a familial bond grew between them. Abu Farouk tore pieces of chicken and fed them to Alan, whose own fingers were stiff from dystrophy and the November cold. "In Syria, most people would treat each other with prejudice," Abu Shadi admitted. "Here, we're family."

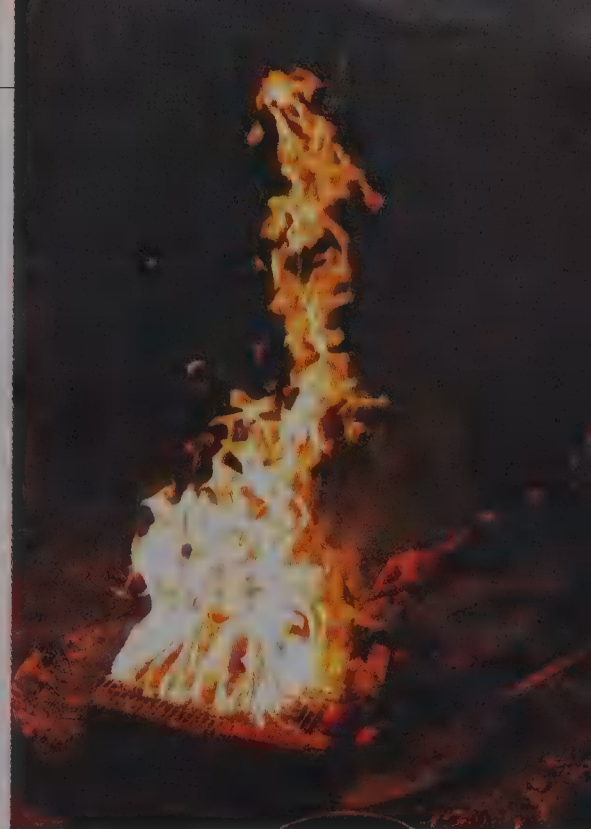
"In Syria, most people would treat each other with prejudice. Here, we're family."

—Abu Shadi

Dalia Mortada is a Syrian-American journalist based in Istanbul. This story is part of her project Savoring Syria and was supported by a grant from the International Women's Media Foundation.

THE RESIDENTS OF RITSONA HAD ARRIVED IN Greece eight months earlier, expecting the stopover to be a minor one on their journeys farther north. But they crossed the Aegean Sea from Turkey in March 2016, just as Europe sealed its borders. What many anticipated would be a one-week detour stretched on into a months-long

PHOTOGRAPHED BY SIMA DIAB



The makeshift *haara* at Ritsona mimics a Syrian neighborhood. Residents share a communal kitchen and cooking responsibilities. At bottom right, a woman serves a typical breakfast of eggs, chicken liver, and *lebneh*, or homemade yogurt.



Residents of the *haara* sit down to a meal in the shared space between their containers.

nightmare. Like tens of thousands of others who'd crossed the Aegean at that time, they were stranded in Greece, waiting for the United Nations resettlement program to send them on to other parts of Europe.

At first, the families who lived around the alley where I interviewed them had no interest in meeting one another, recalled Umm Ibrahim, the matriarch of the group: "We were too busy grieving our bad luck." They lived in tarp tents for more than seven months and survived Greece's scorching summer heat without electricity or plumbing.

But then Umm Farouk, who was pregnant, developed a severe craving for Syrian *warak enab*: grape leaves stuffed with spiced meat and rice, simmered in a lamb broth with lemon and garlic. Umm Ibrahim and Umm Shadi were also pregnant, and the three women bonded. "It was like, 'Where on earth were we going to get those?'" Umm Ibrahim laughed, recalling her friend's pregnancy-induced hankering for one of the more labor-intensive dishes in Syrian cuisine. But the women teamed up and managed to make some, a real gesture of love.

"We've become like siblings," Umm Farouk declared, blinking back tears as she peeled cucumbers for the next meal. "I haven't seen my own flesh-and-blood siblings for four years, and I rarely hear their voices. But if I go more than two or three days without seeing Linda or Umm Ibrahim, I feel like something is missing."

It's difficult to imagine these families becoming so close in the absence of a culinary connection. Their section of the camp is now set up to prepare and share meals together, with two makeshift kitchens built at the back

of the alley. Each cooking space has two or three single-burners, at least one of which is almost always occupied by a pot with boiling chickpeas. The families pooled their money to buy a blender and a panini maker.

I like to call the area the *haara*, a term in colloquial Syrian Arabic that refers to a tight-knit neighborhood street. In Syria, the families in a *haara* are often related, or treat one another like close relatives if they're not. Despite the odd patchwork of families that made up Ritsona's *haara*, that's exactly how they interacted. They physically demarcated their section by throwing a tarp over it—"to keep the rain and dust out," Abu Ibrahim explained. Stray balloons had floated to the top, remnants of Linda and Salah's wedding anniversary.

"It's not just the food and its taste that we miss. It's the ritual around each meal."

—Abu Ibrahim

WITNESSING LIFE IN RITSONA'S *HAARA* was like taking a magnifying glass to the new global Syrian diaspora. Until the war ripped apart tightly woven social circles and scattered their members across the world, families and neighbors stuck together, often living in the same neighborhood for generations. The residents of Ritsona were able to cobble together a semblance of the communities they'd known back home. But once they were settled in new countries across Europe, they would be too far apart to re-create daily rituals like the *sobhiyya*, the cup of thick Turkish coffee shared each morning, along with the latest gossip, among neighboring housewives after their husbands were sent off to work and the kids to school.

Even the technicalities of cooking are changing.

Men traveling alone get advice on how to make certain dishes from their moms, wives, or sisters through calls and voice notes over WhatsApp, the free Internet-based messaging service. Some ingredients are too expensive or can't be found at all. For some, packets of instant coffee replace cardamom-spiced grounds. For most, lamb or beef in Europe is a luxury—and besides, as Abu Ibrahim noted, “the meat is different, rubbery”—so they make do with chicken instead.

At Ritsona, about two to three times a week, the camp “café,” Café Rits, distributes ingredients: seasonal fruits and vegetables, oil, eggs, raw chicken, tea. Café Rits started out as an effort to feed families hot, healthy meals. “But I quickly realized that most people really just wanted to make their own food,” said Carolynn Rockafellow, an American former investment banker who founded the café. For specialty ingredients, a couple of men from the *haara* occasionally make the trip into Athens to stock up on spices like *zaatar*, a tangy mix that includes dried thyme, sumac, and sesame seeds. “It’s not just the food and its taste that we miss,” Abu Ibrahim explained. “It’s the ritual around each meal—

Even the technicalities of Syrian cooking are changing. Some ingredients are too expensive or can't be found at all.

the people you share it with, the occasion, the ambience.” A day grilling is best spent in nature, Abu Shadi added, and *fatteh* should be enjoyed with relatives for Friday brunch.

Since we met, almost all of the families from the *haara* have been resettled. Alan and his family, who now live in Germany, were the first to go. “It’s like old wounds are being ripped open again,” Alan’s mother said, crying, as the other families gathered to bid them goodbye. Umm and Abu Ibrahim are still waiting to move to Ireland, although they now live with their four kids in an apartment in a town close to Ritsona.

After years of violence and years spent in limbo, the families are glad to start new, stable lives. The kids are finally in school; they’re learning French, German, Swedish, English. But some changes aren’t as welcome. “Usually, in Syria, you make three or four main dishes, because you always eat in large gatherings and there’s plenty to share,” said Umm Ibrahim. Between her husband and four kids, there aren’t enough people to feed. With her extended family still in Syria and her friends far away, her *sobhiyya* is, at best, shared virtually. ■



Fatfeh is a hearty casserole of crispy pita bread beneath warm chickpeas and a luscious garlic-yogurt-tahini sauce, most commonly garnished with hot ghee, toasted pine nuts, and fresh chopped parsley. *Fatfeh* was featured at my first dinner at Ritsona, with yogurt that Umm Ibrahim and the other women made themselves. The traditional recipe uses deep-fried pita. But oil for deep-frying can be wasteful and costly, as well as a luxury that many Syrians in the diaspora don't have; I adjusted the recipe to use toasted bread instead. I also garnish with butter instead of ghee, which isn't as widely available in the United States and Europe.

—Dalia Mortada

Ingredients:

1 29 oz can chickpeas (or
1 cup dried chickpeas)
1½ tsp baking soda
4 cups water
1 tsp salt
2 large pitas
2 tbsp olive oil
2 cups full-fat yogurt,
brought to room
temperature
1½ tbsp tahini

1 large (or 2 small)
garlic cloves, mashed
½ tsp table salt
2 tbsp pine nuts, toasted
2 tbsp parsley leaves,
finely chopped
1 tbsp butter, browned
(and hot)

For the full recipe, visit
[thenation.com/article/
fatteh-recipe/](http://thenation.com/article/fatfeh-recipe/).

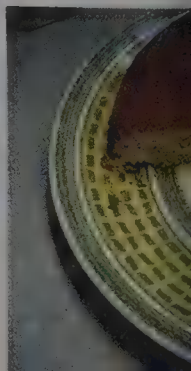
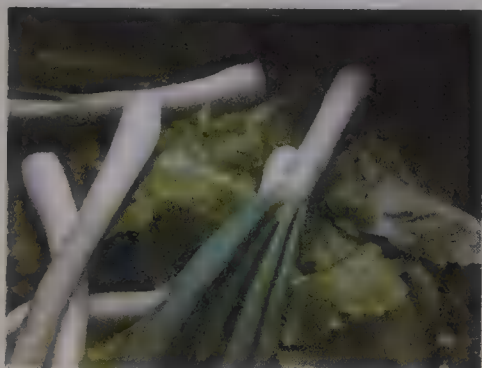
Water is coming.
A whole new life that,
even if it's only
temporarily safe,
is a whole new story
in this small,
Appalachian
Kentucky town.



CLASS-CONFLICT CUIS

In Appalachia, the food shaped by coal country's struggles may secure its post-coal future.

BY SARAH JONES



APPALACHIA IS WHERE THE WHITE TRASH LIVES, OR SO THE STEREOTYPE GOES. Ask the average outsider what Appalachians eat, and they may deliver a similar answer: trash. McNuggets, maybe, or lots of bacon and gravy. Heart-attack food. People choose the stories that they want to believe, and the myth of the dumb, fat hillbilly is an old and popular one. “The term ‘white trash’ is class disparagement due to economics,” the author and East Kentucky native Chris Offutt wrote in a 2015 essay for the *Oxford American*. “I am trash because of where I’m from. I am trash because of where I shop. I am trash because of what I eat.” If people are trash, their food must be, too.

But the story of Appalachian food, like Appalachia itself, is a complicated one. Advocates say that both are entering a new, more optimistic era; that a resurgence in local farming, coupled with renewed interest in traditional Appalachian foodways, could help steer the region toward an environmentally and economically sustainable post-coal future. And unlike the historical attempts to develop Appalachia—imposed principally by external actors, both public and private—food and farming are located well within the region’s own history of political resistance.

“When the company thugs came in to throw an agitating or striking coal miner out of their house, they destroyed the gardens and confiscated or killed the animals that provide food,” notes Ronni Lundy, the author of *Victuals: An Appalachian Journey, With Recipes*. “You know, they got it—the ability to grow food is power in the hands of people they wanted to make powerless.”

And it remains a source of power, say the advocates behind Appalachia’s food renaissance.

“WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE IS THAT WE DO HAVE A STRONG food culture here,” says Lora Smith, co-founder of the Appalachian Food Summit. “There are things that are produced in Appalachian crops that aren’t necessarily produced anywhere else.”

From shucky beans to pickled corn and kilt lettuce, Appalachian food reflects dual realities: poverty and ingenuity. Appalachia is a large region spanning 13 states, according to the Appalachian Regional Commission’s definition, and the amount of arable land varies widely among them. In the southern Appalachians, where the mountains widen out and soften into valleys and fields, larger-scale farming is possible. In the coal fields, however, arable land shrinks, restricting the inhabitants to small-scale farms and grazing livestock. Factor in a sharp winter, which the southern low country mostly lacks, and the specific character of Appalachian foodways begins to make sense. It’s heavy on beans and grains, and greens that can be foraged or grown in sustenance gardens. Pig products feature heavily, because pigs are relatively easy to raise in the mountains.

Foodways: From left to right, the ingredients for kilt lettuce (green onions and lettuce leaves); picking grapes for jelly in western North Carolina; making canned sweet apples; and a plate of homemade cornbread.

To survive harsh winters and harsher topographies, Appalachians learned to adapt. Smith cites shucky beans as

an example: “They have these big pods, and they were selected and grown because they have the most protein. People can dry them and then, in the middle of winter, cook them so they taste like smoked meat. I mean, that’s pretty ingenious.” The lazy-hillbilly stereotype doesn’t survive scrutiny of the foods that hillbillies invented.

Appalachian food is also far more culturally diverse than people realize, Lundy says. Its influences reflect not just an influx of European settlers—the famous Scotch-Irish in addition to Italians, French Huguenots, and others—but also Native American and African diets. This diversity loops back to coal, too, as so many Appalachian stories seem to do. “The story was that, once the miners began to strike and to ask for better wages and conditions,” Lundy explains, “instead of meeting those demands, the coal-mine owners recruited foreign miners to come in. As the agitation continued, they brought in more and more people.” If you need evidence to reject the myth of a monolithically white Appalachia, you don’t need to look much further than its food. Nor is it much of a coincidence that class conflict—warfare, really—shaped the same cuisine.

LUNDY IS CAREFUL TO NOTE THAT APPALACHIAN FOODWAYS never disappeared. The same currents that gave Appalachian food its depth and variety also threatened

The lazy-hillbilly stereotype doesn’t survive scrutiny of the foods that hillbillies invented.



Coal miners’ daughters: The children of miners at the Kingston Pocahontas Coal Company’s Big Sandy Housing Camp, McDowell County, West Virginia, 1946.

SUSTAIN FAIR FOOD



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its survival: The introduction of fast, cheap food, ranging from Jiffy cornbread mix to McDonald's, provided an alternative to labor-intensive farming and cookery. The decline of coal is another factor. As coal jobs inexorably disappear, service jobs, frequently at fast-food restaurants, proliferate: "Coal is all there is in Appalachia, unless you join the ranks of the working poor for a part time job at a grocery store, fast food joint, or the local Wal-Mart," writes Nick Mullins, a former fifth-generation coal miner, on his personal blog.

These jobs tend to pay less than jobs in coal, partly because most aren't unionized, and thus employees have to work long hours to support their families. That effectively prevents them from growing food and raising livestock, and so they remain dependent on the availability of fast, cheap food. "Industrialization not only provides you with money to buy other food; it also deprives you of fresh water, soil, and air," Lundy observes. "It deprives you of time to provide food for your family to last through the long haul." The dynamic bears a basic resemblance to that of Appalachia's company towns, where coal miners were paid in scrip that could only be used at company stores. The contemporary exploitation isn't quite as blatant, but it still exists, and it still traps communities in closed, controlled systems that profit bosses the people here will never meet.

For Appalachia's poorest, capitalism creates a deadly double dilemma. First it changed the way they eat, and then it deprived them of access to health care. "We don't live in food deserts here; we live in what some people call 'food swamps,'" says Smith. "I'm sitting in Hazard, Kentucky, and I'm surrounded by fast-food restaurants. It's not that people don't have access to food—it's that they don't have access to *healthy* food."

People in Appalachia are still disproportionately more likely to die young: According to an August 2017 study, Appalachia's infant mortality rate is 16 percent higher than the rest of the country's, and between 2009 and 2013 the gap between the average Appalachian's life expectancy and the average American's actually increased, from 0.6 to 2.4 years. That deficit is even larger for Appalachians of color.

The study's authors attributed this gap to a variety of factors, including suicide, the opioid epidemic, and chronic lower respiratory disease. But other illnesses, like diabetes and cardiovascular disease, are linked to diet. The Centers for Disease Control reports that more than 33 percent of the so-called "diabetes belt" lies in cen-

tral and south Appalachia, and the rates of diabetes increase further in the region's poorest counties. When entities like the Appalachian Regional Commission talk about economic transition, these are the sorts of inequalities they hope to resolve.

And the region's renewed farm and food scene could help. "Right now, we're seeing new farmers' markets coming online, new farmers coming online, and really innovative projects," Smith says, pointing to the Farmacy project in Whitesburg, Kentucky, as an example. A partnership between the Mountain Comprehensive Health Corporation, the Community Farm Alliance, and Grow Appalachia, the project is open to all pregnant women and Type I diabetes patients regardless of income; people who are obese, or who suffer from Type II diabetes or hypertension, can participate if their income meets certain criteria. According to the project's website, participants receive a "prescription" for a voucher, which they can use at local farmers' markets.

According to the Mountain Comprehensive Health Corporation, the results have been dramatic. A joint survey conducted by the MCHC and the University of Kentucky's Department of Dietetics and Human Nutrition shows that 53.8 percent of the participants spent less on health care as a result. Other data collected by the MCHC reveal a cumulative 2,776-point drop in glucose levels. Appalachia needs more than farmers' markets, but remedying its "food swamp" could save lives.

The Farmacy doesn't exist in isolation. Other projects abound: Pikeville, Kentucky's AppHarvest says that its new greenhouse will employ 140 people in addition to increasing access to fresh produce. Some projects are smaller-scale, consisting of local families who develop abandoned mine land for farms or vineyards; some grow heirloom Appalachian crops, but most grow the sorts of fruits and vegetables that are popular throughout the country. One former miner told the environmental organization Appalachian Voices that his land turned out to be suited to growing blueberries. Some of these projects also get assistance from the federal government. On its website, the Appalachian Regional Commission calls local food a "targeted investment sector," and its 2016–20 strategic plan boasts initiatives like "Bon Appetit Appalachia!," a campaign that highlights over 800 culinary destinations around the region. The ARC says it intends to expand the campaign, which supports its other investments in the tourism industry.

This is a clear opportunity for local farm-

ers and advocates to reclaim an integral piece of Appalachian identity. But expansion notwithstanding, this burgeoning food movement is still in its nascent stages. It's difficult to know the precise effect that it will have on the regional economy—whether it will secure a real, independent future for a region that sorely needs one, or whether its potential will be stymied by national forces beyond its control. And linking it to tourism, as the ARC does, may perpetuate rather than resolve the region's doomed relationship with extractive capitalism.

COAL MAY BE DECLINING, BUT IN some respects it may never really die. The industry has imprinted itself deeply in Appalachia's bones, both by degrading its natural resources and by facilitating the concentration of land ownership. Anthony Flaccavento, a farmer in Washington County, Virginia, and a former Democratic candidate for Congress, says that while most mine land will never be "prime agricultural land...that doesn't mean that the downstream effects of strip mining and even some deep mining didn't impact water resources. Because we know it did." Among these effects, Flaccavento says, is the contamination of streams and water sources and the dumping of "overburden," the soil and rock that has been removed for the purposes of mining.

The actions of industries like coal—timber is another culprit—also makes land difficult for would-be farmers to obtain. A significant portion of Appalachian land is still owned by people and corporations that aren't actually based in the area. "Broadly speaking, anywhere from a third to three-quarters of the land in some counties is owned by outside industries," says historian Elizabeth Catte, author of the forthcoming *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*. The situation is improving, she adds; in West Virginia, for example, much of the land is shifting from absentee to in-state ownership. But inequities remain. "You can't get a fair market value of the land because people value the land so much," Catte says.

Lundy sees a similar problem in western North Carolina, where she lives, though it can't be pinned entirely on the coal or timber industry. Farmers "can't buy additional land," she says, "because it's priced for people who want to build second homes—

people who largely come into the region for a limited period of time."

This hints at one of the chief dilemmas inherent in the prospect of food as the driver of an economic renaissance. The region needs tourists, and as Asheville, North Carolina, has discovered, a food scene draws them in. But in order to grow that food—even the traditional Appalachian crops that thrive on small-scale farms and gardens—you need land, and those same tourists complicate an already difficult market for it. Farmers also need to make a living, which means they have to charge certain prices for their food. "It's a dilemma," Flaccavento admits, but adds: "We were pretty conscious of the critique of the local-food movement and the organic-food movement as being for the elites."

Flaccavento says that in addition to Whitesburg's Farmacy program, the farmers' markets in Abingdon and St. Paul, Virginia, accept EBT, and that despite the obstacles, the interest in farming continues to grow—and so does the demand for healthy food. "If you took a snapshot of West Virginia, southwest Virginia, east Tennessee, and Kentucky now compared to 20 years ago, it's a pretty dramatic difference," Flaccavento says. "There's a lot more farming going on." Many of these new farmers, he notes, are young people who either hail from Appalachia or move there as adults. "The market demand for [healthy food] is not what it is on the outskirts of, say, Philadelphia," he adds, "but it's pretty substantial."

"Is food the solution to Appalachia's problem?" Lundy asks rhetorically. "No—food is a piece you have to weave a larger net around. But it's there, and it's this wonderful thing that we have. We've got to be careful not to have it extracted from us, but we can cultivate it in a way that feeds tourists as well as the people who live here."

Food is the story of the people who invented it, and for Appalachia, it's a definitive rebuttal to tired stereotypes. Its renaissance here tells us something else: If the region's economic transition falters, it will be because of failures in federal policy—a refusal to raise the minimum wage and to expand access to health care—and not because of Appalachia's cultural deficiencies. There are no trash people, and there is no trash food. There are only trash politics. ■

Sarah Jones is a staff writer for the New Republic, where she covers politics and culture. She is originally from Washington County, Virginia.

"We don't live in a food desert. We live in a food swamp."

—Lora Smith, co-founder of the Appalachian Food Summit

"Powerful, important"

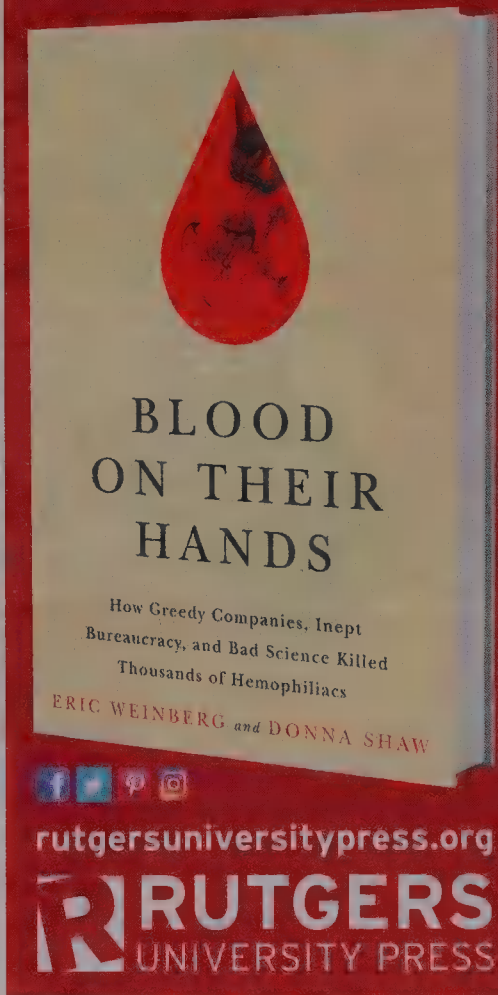
—*Publishers Weekly*

"Will make your blood boil at the inhumanity of people who knew they were killing patients by the thousands and kept right on...a powerful human story that is hard to put down and will be even harder to forget."

—David Cay Johnston

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CONFESSIONS OF A BEEF EATER

In India, worshipping cows has become a pretext for violence against the country's Muslim minority.

BY AMITAVA FUMAR



I'LL CONFESS TO THE SIN OF BEEF EATING IN A MOMENT. LET ME first confess to the sin of not having a true knowledge of science.

In May of this year, Justice Mahesh Chandra Sharma of the Rajasthan High Court suggested that the cow be adopted as the national animal of India. His rationale was that millions of gods and goddesses reside in the cow. And here's the crucial science bit: According to the judge, the "cow is the only living being which intakes oxygen and emits oxygen."

I grew up in India during the 1960s and '70s in a meat-eating Hindu family. Only my mother and my grandparents were vegetarians. The rest of us enjoyed eating—on special occasions—chicken, or fish, or mutton. But I had never eaten beef in India until this summer. And what I ate in restaurants in Mumbai and Delhi, I was repeatedly informed, technically wasn't beef—it was buffalo meat, or "buff." It has become too dangerous, in the current political climate, to kill a cow. On the very day I had my first taste of what turned out to be a surprisingly tender buffalo steak in Mumbai, national newspapers carried a report from my hometown of Patna, headlined "Three thrashed in Bihar on suspicion of carrying beef."

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to a landslide victory in the national parliamentary elections in 2014, one of the planks of his campaign was a ban on cow slaughter. He accused the party in power at that time of promoting a "Pink Revolution" (pink because "when you slaughter an animal, then the color of its meat is pink"). The government, Modi said, boasted of India being the world's leading meat exporter. Even in his earlier speeches, available on YouTube, you can hear him declaiming against the killing of cows: "Brothers and sisters, I cannot say whether your heart is pained by this or not, but my heart screams out in agony again and again. And why you remain silent, why you tolerate this, I just cannot understand."

Speeches like this were not simply about animal welfare. Modi's words are an incitement for India's Hindu majority, which mostly doesn't eat beef, to turn against the minority, particularly Muslims, who are conventionally represented as beef eaters. Cow slaughter has long been banned in parts of India, but after the BJP's victory, frenzied mobs of vigilantes felt emboldened to make accusations and mete out brutal punishment.

In Mumbai, two journalist friends took me to a restaurant named Imbiss, which bills itself as a "meating joint." The chef-owner, Bruce Rodrigues, said that he'd love to serve beef, but added that it's "a sensitive issue." Since 2015, when the right-wing Hindu government in Maharashtra state criminalized the consumption (or even possession) of beef, Rodrigues has relied on the buffalo brought by farmers to the city's largest abattoir, in the suburb of Deonar. Deonar is also Mumbai's biggest garbage dump, the waste standing 18 stories high. (It's not too much of a stretch to say that, in a Hindu-dominated society, meat and waste can often be relegated to the same place. A conjecture favored by some historians is that India's beef taboo has its roots in the cow's hallowed position in an agricultural society adversely affected by traditional animal sacrifice.)

In a country where a large segment of the majority holds fast to this taboo, a steak is cheaper than chicken. Rodrigues told me that prior to the ban on cow slaughter, he served steaks for only 180 Indian rupees (roughly \$3) apiece. Away from a middle-class restaurant like Imbiss, there is a grave economic and social cost to the ban: It deprives some of the poorest Indians, mostly Dalits and

Muslims, of the cheapest source of animal protein. As journalist Shoaib Daniyal pointed out a couple of years ago, this subset is far from insignificant: The number of people who eat beef in India—about 80 million—is larger than the population of Britain, France, or Italy.

Before I left Mumbai, I had dinner with the controversial columnist Shobhaa De. She told me that eating beef was, for her, "an act of defiance." After the government in Maharashtra enacted the proscription, De tweeted: "I just ate beef. Come and murder me." She received many angry responses, and a complaint against her was filed with the police.

The truth is that, in recent times, it is more often than not the poor and the powerless who have been lynched for eating beef—or merely the suspicion of doing so. Earlier this year, in June, two brothers were stabbed on a train in Haryana state, in northern India, in a fight over seats. The victims, one of whom died from his wounds, were Muslim; the men who attacked them had called them "beef eaters." And last year, also in Haryana, a Muslim woman who was gang-raped said that her attackers had asked her if she ate beef; when she said no, they insisted that she was lying.

When I went from Mumbai to Delhi, a friend took me to a restaurant called Mahabelly. The restaurant serves Malayali food from the southern Indian state of Kerala, where a left coalition is in power and the consumption of beef is legal. But at Mahabelly, too—because it was in Delhi and not Kerala—we were served buff. The dish was called "Erachi double fry": small pieces of the protein fried with grated coconut, mustard seeds, cumin, curry leaves, pepper, and other spices, generating a dark, intense flavor.

About a two-hour drive east from the restaurant where we were sitting is a village called Bisada. On a late September night in 2015, a middle-aged carpenter named Mohammad Akhlaq had just finished dinner when a mob poured into his house. Akhlaq's family were the only Muslims in the Hindu village, it was later reported. Earlier that evening, an accusation was made from a public-address system at the village temple that a calf had been stolen and slaughtered. The enraged crowd, led by the son of the local Hindu-party legislator, cornered Akhlaq in his bedroom, where he was hiding with his daughter and one of his sons.

The assault was brutal. Akhlaq's son was left for dead after a sewing machine belonging to Akhlaq's wife was used to split his head open. Akhlaq was dragged out of the house by his legs and then beaten with bricks and iron rods. While he lay dying in the lane outside his home, some people recorded videos on their cell phones as others called him a Pakistani and shouted for his death.

There is a further twist to this horrifying story. The police couldn't find any evidence that Akhlaq had slaughtered a calf. Was the meat found in his fridge beef? At least one lab test concluded that it was mutton. Regardless, Akhlaq's killing was a crime, and by now most of those accused of his murder have been released on bail. The sad truth that Akhlaq's lynching has revealed about us Indians is that, while we will not kill cows, killing human beings is an entirely different, and entirely palatable, matter. ■

While we will not kill cows, killing human beings is an entirely different, and entirely palatable, matter.

Amitava Kumar teaches at Vassar College. His latest book, *Immigrant, Montana: A Novel*, is forthcoming from Knopf.



MASS EXPOSURE

Is the world's most popular herbicide as safe as Monsanto says it is?

BY DENE FREDSOLI

IN 1970, JOHN E. FRANZ, A 40-YEAR-OLD CHEMIST FROM SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS, HIT upon a discovery that would profoundly change agriculture: a chemical that works its way into the leaves of weeds and down to their roots, eventually killing them. Franz sold the patent for the breakthrough to his employer, Monsanto, for \$5. Four years later, Monsanto released Roundup.

“Weeds? No problem. Nothing kills weeds better,” announced the actors in the commercials for Roundup as they attacked dandelions with spray bottles. The product was an instant success, and in 1987 Franz won the National Medal of Technology for his discovery. Today, Roundup is the most popular herbicide in the world, generating more than \$4 billion in annual revenue for Monsanto.

Roundup’s active ingredient, glyphosate, is widely perceived to be innocuous in the environment because it targets an enzyme not found in animals or humans. When it comes to plants, however, the chemical kills indiscriminately—except for those plants genetically designed to withstand it. In the 1990s, Monsanto began to sell its patented “Roundup Ready” seeds, allowing farmers to spray for weeds without damaging their crops. The combination of herbicide and resistant seeds helped Monsanto become one of the world’s most powerful agriculture corporations. Today, over 90 percent of domestic soy, corn, and cotton crops are genetically engineered to be glyphosate-resistant, accounting for more than 168 million acres.

But the future of the ubiquitous herbicide is in question. Monsanto is currently fighting allegations that glyphosate might not be as safe as advertised, particularly when combined with other chemicals in Roundup. In 2015, an international science committee ruled that glyphosate is a probable human carcinogen, countering previous determinations by regulatory agencies in the United States and other countries. Soon after, more than 200 people sued Monsanto in a federal case now centralized in California, claiming that Roundup caused them to develop non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, a common blood cancer. Over 1,000 people have filed similar suits against the company in state courts in Arizona, Delaware, Missouri, Nebraska, and elsewhere.

Attorneys and activists have accused Monsanto of manipulating the science around glyphosate’s health impacts—in essence, of following the playbook written by Big Tobacco. Documents revealed in the federal case also suggest a cozy relationship between the company and regulators at the Environmental Protection Agency, which is currently reviewing glyphosate’s safety. For its part, Monsanto maintains that Roundup is harmless. “Our lawyers have produced over 10 million pages of documents, and the plaintiffs’ lawyers managed to cherry-pick a handful that reflect the use of some inappropriate language by some Monsanto folks,” said Scott Partridge, Monsanto’s vice president for global strategy. “There’s not a single document that reflects that glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup, causes cancer.”

The public brawl couldn’t come at a more pivotal moment. Monsanto is currently pursuing a mega-

merger with the German chemical giant Bayer AG, a \$66 billion deal that still has to be approved by American and German antitrust regulators. The EPA’s latest safety assessment of glyphosate is expected soon, and the European Union is also deliberating whether to relicense its use. (French officials have said they will vote against relicensing.) Meanwhile, the chemical at the center of the safety debate has lost some of its power to increasing weed resistance. Glyphosate-resistant “superweeds” like pigweed, which can grow three inches a day, reaching heights of up to seven feet, have already invaded some 90 million acres of American cropland, forcing farmers to use more powerful chemicals in larger doses.

Since Franz’s discovery in 1970, Americans have sprayed 1.8 million tons of glyphosate on their crops, lawns, and gardens; globally, the figure stands at 9.4 million tons. Glyphosate residue has been reported in many popular foods, from cherries to Cheerios, and early research has found it in 86 percent of a sampling of people in regions across the United States. Another preliminary study reported glyphosate residue in 90 percent of a sample of pregnant women in the Midwest, with higher levels correlated to premature births and low birth weights. (Both studies were limited by small sample sizes, underscoring the need for further research.) Paul Winchester, the medical director of the neonatal intensive-care unit at the Franciscan St. Francis Health system in Indianapolis and lead author of the Midwestern study, said such findings should alarm anyone who cares about health and safety.

“We should be concerned,” Winchester said. “This is mass exposure.”



ONE WARM DAY IN JULY, TERI MCCALL DROVE a four-wheeler down a winding track through groves of citrus, avocado, and persimmon trees. McCall’s husband, Jack, always joked that she would never work on their 20-acre farm on the Central California coast, four hours south of San Francisco, because she “might break a nail.” But since Jack’s death in 2015, Teri has been doing most of the work. “The first year, the lemons just fell to the ground,” she said. “I wasn’t able to do anything, I was so distraught. Now I’m in constant battle with the gophers.”

McCall remembers her reaction when a doctor said the rash on Jack's neck was cancer: "I just laughed and thought, 'How could that be true?'" Jack was 65 at the time, working on the farm full-time and surfing on the weekends. The doctor diagnosed the condition as primary cutaneous B-cell lymphoma, usually benign and confined to the skin. But the rash persisted. Four years later, Jack felt swelling in his lymph nodes. That time, the diagnosis was grim: non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Undergoing chemotherapy and radiation, Jack grew thin and weak. On Christmas Eve, Teri found Jack with his eyes rolled back and his mouth twisted up; he'd had a stroke. Teri and the children spent the night by Jack's bedside in the hospital, and the next morning—six months after the diagnosis—she decided to have him taken off life support. "It was the worst moment of my life," Teri said.

Jack preferred not to use chemicals, but he believed Roundup was safe and used it regularly for more than 30 years. According to Teri, it was the only herbicide he ever used. As the family sat around Jack's bed on his last days, his son read on the Internet about potential links between Roundup and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. After Jack's death, Teri could barely get out of bed, but eventually she began reading the reports herself. She now believes Roundup was responsible for his death—and maybe their dog's, too. Duke, a black Lab, spent every minute with Jack until the day he died of lymphoma in 2009.

In early 2016, McCall joined other farmers, gardeners, migrant workers, and landscapers, represented by multiple law firms, to sue Monsanto in federal court. One plaintiff, John Barton, 68, has lived and worked on California farms for most of his life. "We've used Roundup since it came out for weed control on our reservoirs and the ditches of cotton fields," he said. Barton's cancer has spread to both sides of his body; he's retired from farming and no longer uses Roundup. But he's continually exposed to the chemical because he lives in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. "Right across the road from me is GMO alfalfa; the dairies do GMO corn," he said, speaking of the fields planted with crops that have been modified to resist repeated dousing with Roundup.

McCall and Barton's case hinges on a determination made by the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in March 2015. The IARC, which has been developing reports on ex-

pected and known carcinogens since the 1970s, classifies materials into categories, from carcinogenic to humans (Group 1) to "probably not carcinogenic" (Group 4). The agency's evaluation of glyphosate was conducted by a group of 17 experts from 11 countries and led by Aaron Blair, an epidemiologist with the National Cancer Institute. In the months prior to and then during a week-long meeting in Lyon, France, the committee pored over the publicly available scientific literature—hundreds of pages of published journal articles and reports.

The IARC concluded that glyphosate should be categorized in Group 2A, meaning "probably carcinogenic to humans," alongside DDT, the insecticide malathion, and strains of human papillomavirus. The IARC experts considered studies of disease patterns in human populations and experiments on human tissues and cells as well as on lab animals. They reported convincing evidence that glyphosate causes cancer in animal models. They also concluded that studies clearly show DNA and chromosomal damage in human cells—damage that can lead to the emergence of cancer.

They did not, however, go so far as to report that the chemical definitely causes cancer in humans. "There wasn't enough evidence to say that we know this stuff causes cancer as we say with smoking, alcohol, and benzene—for those, there's no quibbling," Blair explained. "'Probable' means there's quite a lot of evidence that it does cause cancer, but there's still some doubt."

Monsanto immediately released a statement denouncing the IARC verdict: "Regulatory agencies have reviewed all the key studies examined by IARC—and many more—and arrived at the overwhelming consensus that glyphosate poses no unreasonable risks to humans or the environment when used according to label instructions."

But the company couldn't contain the firestorm ignited by the IARC ruling, which had immediate regulatory and legal implications. Within months, nearly 600 scientists in 72 countries signed a manifesto calling for a ban on the spraying of glyphosate-based herbicides. (Even before the release of the IARC report, some countries—El Salvador, Colombia, Brazil, Bermuda, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Sri Lanka—had already instituted a ban or were considering some form of one.) California uses IARC classifications as the basis for registering chemicals under Proposition 65, which mandates the labeling of all chemicals known to cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm; Roundup sold in the state must soon be labeled. Then there are the lawsuits: By the fall of 2015, Monsanto faced the first of what would become a cascade of suits connecting Roundup to cancer.

MONSANTO HAD LONG BEEN PREPARING to challenge the IARC report, according to a six-page confidential strategy document unearthed in the federal suit. In its defense of glyphosate, the company claims that the IARC overlooked important research and selectively interpreted data to arrive at its "probable carcinogen" classification. Monsanto also frequently



Teri and Jack McCall.

Since 1970, Americans have sprayed 1.8 million tons of glyphosate on crops, lawns, and gardens.



points out that the EPA—as well as regulatory agencies in Canada and Europe—lists glyphosate as noncarcinogenic.

The discrepancy between the IARC and other regulatory agencies is in part due to the fact that they have different goals. “IARC looks at the literature and makes a determination of whether, in some circumstances, under some conditions, under some types of exposure, this stuff might or might not present a cancer hazard,” Blair explained. “What IARC does not do is to say which circumstances those are, and how much exposure you have to have to really be worried—that’s risk assessment, and that’s what EPA does.”

But there are also serious questions about the EPA’s own processes for evaluating chemicals—questions amplified by a trove of e-mails, text messages, letters, and memos between Monsanto and high-ranking EPA officials that were unsealed in the court proceedings and obtained via Freedom of Information Act requests by the consumer group US Right to Know.

Marion Copley was an EPA toxicologist who worked for 30 years researching the effects of chemicals on mice. In March of 2013, as she was dying of breast cancer, Copley wrote a striking letter to Jess Rowland, deputy director of the EPA’s pesticide division. Rowland led the Cancer Assessment Review Committee, which was evaluating glyphosate; Copley also served on the committee. In her letter, Copley described how the property that makes glyphosate such a potent pesticide—its ability to target an enzyme that plants need to grow—also plays a role in the formation of tumors in humans. She named 14 specific methods by which it could do the job. “Any one of these mechanisms alone...can cause tumors, but glyphosate causes all of them simultaneously,” she wrote. “It is essentially certain that glyphosate causes cancer.”

Then she got personal. “Jess: For once in your life, listen to me and don’t play your political conniving games with the science to favor the registrants.” She closed the letter: “I have cancer and I don’t want these serious issues to go unaddressed before I go to my grave. I have done my duty.” Copley died the next year.

Rowland’s job required him to work closely with registrants, but the documents suggest a strikingly friendly relationship with Monsanto employees. One April 2015 e-mail indicates that Rowland told the company he would try to kill a

Class

IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE WORKING CLASS

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Educators
Community-leaders

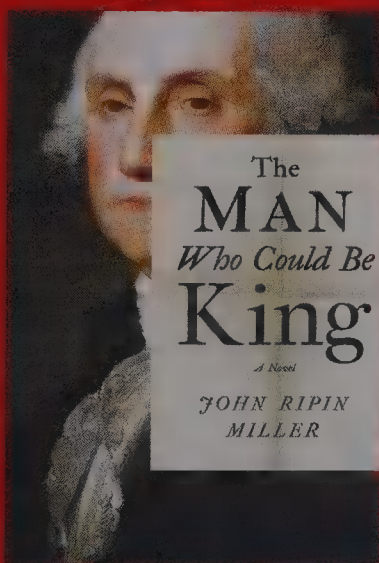
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planned review of glyphosate by the Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). That agency, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is charged with evaluating potential adverse health effects from exposure to manmade chemicals. "If I can kill this I should get a medal," Rowland said of the review, according to an e-mail written by Dan Jenkins, Monsanto's lead liaison to government agencies. "I doubt EPA and Jess can kill this; but it's good to know they are actually going to make the effort," Jenkins wrote to his colleagues in the same e-mail.

Other EPA officials weighed in against the ATSDR's proposed review, claiming it was unnecessary since the EPA was conducting its own evaluation. "I am looking at it from the standpoint of it being a duplicative government effort given that we are currently in the midst of our review now," Jack Housenger, director of the EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs, wrote to a colleague at the CDC on May 22.

Monsanto got what it wanted: By October 2015, the ATSDR review was officially on hold, and Monsanto was anticipating good news from the EPA. Jenkins updated his colleagues: "Spoke to EPA: is going to conclude that IARC is wrong." Six months later, on a Friday in April 2016, the EPA's long-anticipated report on glyphosate, signed by Rowland and stamped "final," was released on the Internet. But it lasted only the weekend; EPA retracted the report first thing Monday morning, calling its release premature. Still, Monsanto had just enough time to dispatch a press release with the headline "Once Again, EPA Concludes That Glyphosate Does Not Cause Cancer."

Rowland retired within weeks of the release. That came as no surprise to Monsanto: The previous September, Jenkins had told his co-workers, "Jess will be retiring from EPA in 5-6 months and could be useful as we move forward with ongoing glyphosate defense."

In March, Congressman Ted Lieu (D-CA) called for the Justice Department to launch a special investigation into reports suggesting collusion between Monsanto and EPA employees reviewing glyphosate. The EPA's



"I doubt EPA and Jess can kill this; but it's good to know they are actually going to make the effort."

—Dan Jenkins,
Monsanto's lead
liaison to government
agencies

In February, activists in Germany called on the European Union to ban glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup.

Office of the Inspector General has said that it's looking into it. Rowland's attorney and the EPA did not respond to repeated requests for comment about Rowland's relationship with Monsanto. The company denies that it tried to improperly influence the agency. "The [regulatory] process requires a tremendous amount of contact and interaction with the government," said Monsanto's Partridge in an interview. Partridge maintained that Rowland's comment about getting a medal referred only to his desire to avoid duplicative studies at the taxpayers' expense.

THE EPA HAS OFTEN BEEN CRITICIZED FOR its chemical-screening processes, in large part because it relies on research funded or conducted by the chemical companies themselves. In 2015, the agency determined that there was "no convincing evidence" that glyphosate disrupts the human endocrine system—a determination based almost entirely on studies funded by Monsanto, other chemical companies, and industry groups. None of the industry studies, which were obtained by *The Intercept's* Sharon Lerner, concluded that there were any health risks, despite the fact that some of their data suggested otherwise—and in contrast to a few of the small number of independent studies considered by the EPA, which did find evidence that glyphosate harms the endocrine system. Unlike the EPA, the IARC considers only published, peer-reviewed science, and does not consider—or, in most cases, even have access to—a corporation's studies.

An additional limitation in the EPA approval process is that it examines only the main active ingredient in a product—glyphosate, in the case of Roundup—and not the complete formula, which includes inert ingredients. (The IARC's assessment considered studies of both the full Roundup formula and glyphosate alone.) These additional chemicals are often withheld as trade secrets, making it more difficult for independent researchers to study their risks. But scientists have recently begun to identify many of the other components in Roundup, and have found some to be more toxic to human cells than glyphosate itself.

Plaintiffs claim that Monsanto "knew or should have known that Roundup is more toxic than glyphosate alone" but continued to advertise the product as safe. In a 2002 e-mail, Monsanto product-safety strategist William Heydens wrote to Donna Farmer, one of the company's leading toxicologists: "What I've been hearing from you is that this continues to be the case with these studies—glyphosate is OK but the formulated product (and thus the surfactant) does the damage." (Surfactants reduce the surface tension of water, helping the herbicide cling to leaves instead of flowing into the soil.)

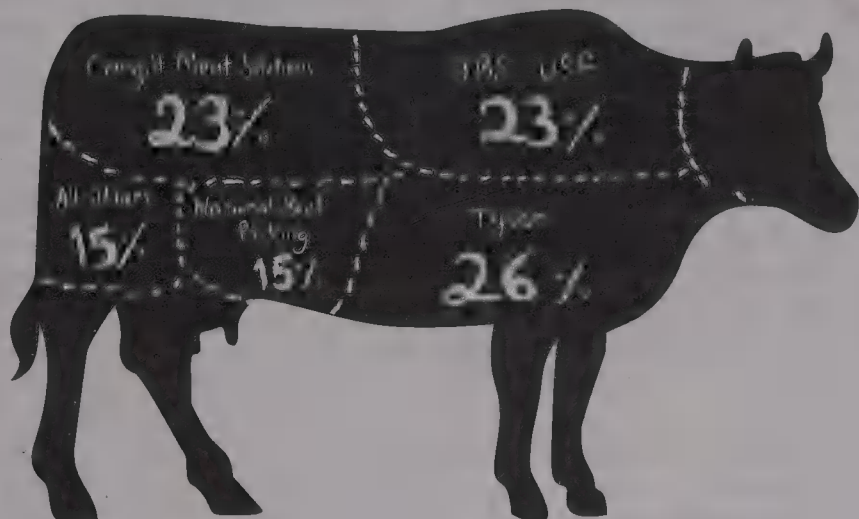
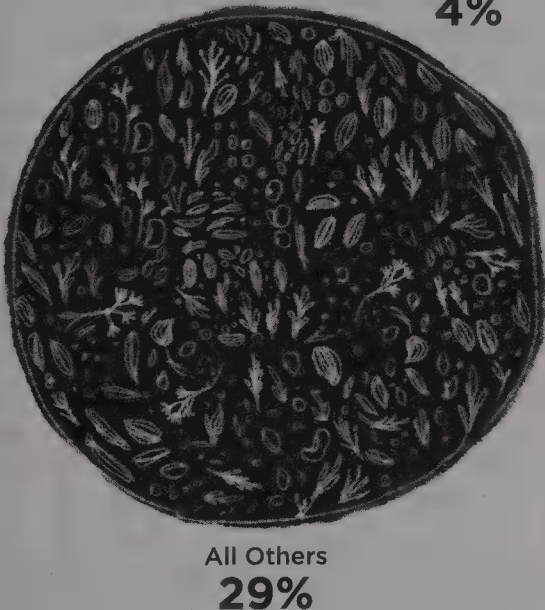
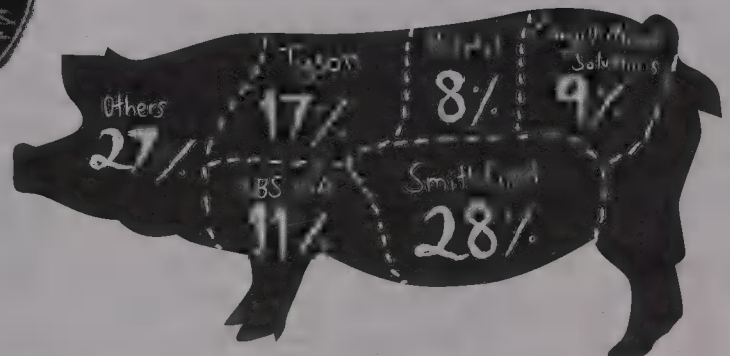
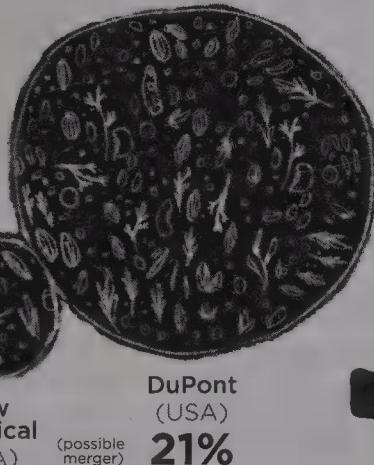
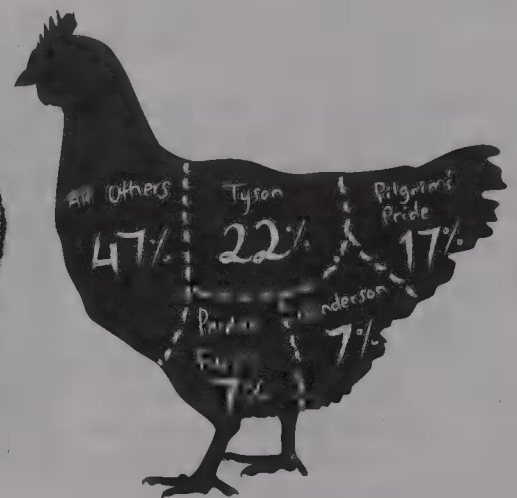
In a November 2003 e-mail to Monsanto CEO Sekhar Natarajan, Farmer wrote that the company "cannot say that Roundup is not a carcinogen" because "we have not done the necessary testing on the formulation to make that statement." She added, "We can make that statement about glyphosate and infer that there is no reason to believe that Roundup would cause cancer."



OLIGOPOLY

BIG FOOD

Seed and chemical corporations, meat producers, grocery chains, even beer companies are devouring smaller businesses as well as their major competitors, leading to extreme consolidation throughout the food industry. Thanks to lax antitrust enforcement, farmers are increasingly bound by oppressive contract systems that leave them at the mercy of the handful of companies to which they can sell. For all of us eaters, consolidation means fewer choices and higher prices. For Big Food, it means greater profits and ever-expanding political power, which it defends via various lobbying groups like the National Pork Producers Council, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the National Restaurant Association.



Other documents released in the legal case raise questions about Monsanto's influence on glyphosate research. One tactic outlined in Monsanto's plan for responding to the IARC was to "support the development of three new papers on glyphosate focused on epidemiology and toxicology." Heydens proposed in a February 2015 e-mail to colleagues that Monsanto "ghost-write" part of a paper by outside scientists: "We would be keeping the cost down by us doing the writing and they would just edit and sign their names so to speak," he said, explaining that this was how Monsanto "handled" an earlier paper on glyphosate's safety. That earlier paper, published in 2000, acknowledged Monsanto's help in data collection, but it did not list any company employees as co-authors, contrary to the transparency standards upheld by most journals. In response to questions about the apparent ghostwriting, Partridge objected to the term—even though Heydens used it himself—adding that the activities described "were entirely professional and aboveboard."

Monsanto also hired an outside consulting firm, the Intertek Group, to orchestrate a so-called "independent" review of glyphosate's health effects to refute the IARC's cancer assessment. A disclosure accompanying the review, which was published in *Critical Reviews in Toxicology*, reported that Intertek was paid by Monsanto but claimed that "neither any Monsanto company employees nor any attorneys reviewed any of the Expert Panel's manuscripts prior to submission to the journal." In fact, internal e-mails indicate that Heydens and other Monsanto employees reviewed and edited drafts before the report was published. "I have gone through the entire document and indicated what I think should stay, what can go, and in a couple spots I did a little editing," wrote Heydens in a February 2016 e-mail to Ashley Roberts, senior vice president in Intertek's food and nutrition division. Partridge defended the review's independence: "It did not amount to substantial contributions, editing [or] commenting—nothing substantive to alter the scientists' conclusions."

"DUBT IS OUR PRODUCT," A CIGARETTE-company executive once wrote, "since it is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also a means of establishing a controversy." For 50 years, Big Tobacco manufactured uncertainties about the health impacts of cigarettes, with ads featuring smoking physicians and a media campaign claiming that there was "no proof" of any health concerns caused by smoking. In defending glyphosate, plaintiffs say, Monsanto is following a familiar playbook: hire scientists to produce friendly results, fund front groups—Monsanto has contributed to the American Council on Science and Health, which defends glyphosate and other chemicals from "junk science"—and use the media to sway public opinion.

"It appears as though we are seeing the unraveling of a very carefully crafted corporate narrative about the safety of a well-known product used around the world, just as we saw when the dark and dirty secrets of the tobacco industry came to light," said Carey Gillam, re-



"Twenty years later, all these people have certain cancers, and we ask why. Then scientists connect the dots."

—Robin Greenwald, attorney

search director for US Right to Know and the author of a new book, *Whitewash: The Story of a Weed Killer, Cancer, and the Corruption of Science*. "Monsanto's own internal communications indicate that it has worked long and hard to suppress scientific research showing dangers with its herbicide while at the same time setting up secret networks of straw men to push product propaganda."

Monsanto has also tried to undermine the credibility of scientists on the IARC committee. "The basic strategy is: Attack people who've done the research you don't like—mercilessly," said epidemiologist Devra Davis, a former appointee to the US Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board and president of the nonprofit Environmental Health Trust. "They go after the researcher, they go after their funding.... Even the scientists who reported the formation of the ozone hole were vilified before they got their Nobel Prize" in chemistry.

Specifically, Monsanto argues that Blair, the IARC committee chair, was aware of but discounted data that showed no cancer link. The data came from the Agricultural Health Study, an epidemiological survey of cancer and other health problems in a cohort of nearly 90,000 farmers, licensed pesticide applicators, and their families in Iowa and North Carolina. (Blair was a senior researcher for the survey.) Monsanto asserts it is "the most comprehensive study on farmer exposure to pesticides and cancer" undertaken and says that if data from the study had been considered, the IARC would have categorized glyphosate as noncarcinogenic.

Some researchers familiar with that study say there's a good reason that it wasn't included—namely, that it hadn't been published yet. "If you evaluated everything unpublished, you're going to get a bunch of garbage," said Peter Infante, an epidemiologist who has evaluated carcinogens for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and has participated in other IARC reviews. Infante believes that there are other major problems with the survey: The control group—which had not been exposed to glyphosate—was exposed to another pesticide suspected of causing non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. That's a problematic comparison, Infante said, akin to asking "whether high testosterone levels elevate the risk of heart attacks in men and then comparing those men with a group that already has heart disease. Obviously, you're going to underestimate the risk."

THE CURRENT TASK FOR THE ATTORNEYS representing Teri McCall and other plaintiffs is to convince presiding Judge Vince Chhabria that there's enough evidence to indicate that glyphosate "generally" causes cancer. If that effort succeeds, Chhabria will begin to hear individual plaintiffs' testimony next year and decide whether Monsanto must pay compensatory damages, which could run into the tens or hundreds of millions.

Cancer victims have won a few recent cases against

chemical companies. In August, Johnson & Johnson was ordered to pay \$417 million in damages to a woman who developed ovarian cancer after decades of using the company's talcum powder. In February, DuPont and another chemical company agreed to pay more than \$900 million to settle some 3,500 lawsuits, after a federal court ruled that Teflon production at a plant on the Ohio River in Parkersburg, West Virginia, caused cancer in workers and residents.

"The law requires these companies to be truthful about what's in their product, but they frequently don't submit the information; they suppress it," said Robin Greenwald, an attorney with the New York City-based firm of Weitz & Luxenberg, who won multimillion-dollar settlements for victims of the 2010 BP oil spill and represents dozens of plaintiffs in the Roundup case. "Fifteen, 20 years later, all these people have certain cancers and certain illnesses, and we ask why. Then scientists connect the dots, and then litigation happens. And in litigation, you get documents from the defendant, and then lo and behold: They knew."

The stakes in these cases are high—for Monsanto, for cancer victims, for consumers, and for farmers. For better or worse, today's agricultural system relies on pesticides, "all of which come with inherent dangers," said William Curran, a plant-science expert at Pennsylvania State University who works with farmers combating glyphosate-resistant weeds. "If Roundup is removed, we might be left with herbicides that are far worse—if you can't use glyphosate, what are you going to use?"

Many agronomists are optimistic about new practices and technologies to control weeds with fewer chemicals. One promising invention involves a piece of machinery that attaches to a combine at harvest time and pulverizes weed seeds so they won't sprout up in spring. Certain farming methods can reduce the need for pesticides, including "integrated weed management," which uses a combination of herbicides with plowing and crop rotation. Some farmers reduce the use of chemicals by planting winter cover crops, such as legumes and grasses, which add nutrients to the soil, reduce erosion, and prevent weeds from gaining a foothold. "It's not like we need to go back to our old agrarian ways," Curran said, though he acknowledged that it can be tough to persuade farmers to change their practices.

The federal lawsuit itself may not resolve the dispute about glyphosate's safety: The research is still evolving. "Every time a product gets looked at for the first time, this scientific debate goes on," said Blair. "This is not unusual. In fact, that's what science is. Studies are carried out, findings occur, people evaluate them, not everybody agrees." Eventually, enough information is gathered to reach some consensus—but that can take decades. Meanwhile, with every year that passes, another 300 million pounds of glyphosate is sprayed upon the land. ■

Rene Ebersole is a freelance journalist who specializes in narrative articles and investigative pieces about science, health, and environmental issues. This story was produced in collaboration with the Food & Environment Reporting Network, a nonprofit investigative-news organization.

DRINK

FIGHTING SPIRITS

These days, the news goes best with a stiff drink. We asked three booze experts for concoctions to fortify the resistance.



KNEE-BEND

(aka the Kaepernickebein)

by David Wondrich

The Knickebein—or, roughly, "Knee-Bend"—was a German-American drink of the 19th century with an egg yolk floating in it, a whole bunch of sweet liqueur, and a foamy egg-white top. For this modern tribute to principled protest, I kept the egg white and a splash of liqueur but replaced everything else with good American spirits and a touch of lemon juice. There's a little bitterness in it to remind us of the bitter reason why we protest.

➔ Stir together in cocktail shaker:

½ oz fresh-squeezed lemon juice

1 tsp white sugar

➔ Add:

1¼ oz well-aged California brandy

¾ oz straight rye whiskey

1 tsp Amaro CioCiaro or other orange-heavy Italian amaro

½ oz raw egg white*

➔ Shake viciously and strain into a chilled cocktail coupe. Dot five to six drops of Peychaud's Bitters on the egg foam in a row running around the left-hand rim of the glass and, using a toothpick, draw them out into parallel red stripes.

*This is much easier to measure if you whip it lightly and briefly with a fork first. Or you can just say "To hell with it" and leave it out entirely. It's your drink. You'll have to forget about the nifty red-and-white stripes, though.

David Wondrich, the James Beard Award-winning author of Imbibe, is the senior drinks columnist at The Daily Beast, after putting in a decade and a half as Esquire's drinks correspondent. He lives in Brooklyn.



COVFEFE NEGRONI

by Naomi Gordon-Loeb

What is "covfefe"? It could be the Orange One's Reddit password; it could be the name of a hideous new luxury-condo complex he's planning in Downtown Brooklyn. For now, let's say it's a cocktail: a Negroni variation we can all raise in a toast the day we finally kick him out of office (and perhaps drink to soothe our covfefe woes along the way).

➔ Add to a mixing glass filled with ice:

1 oz dark rum

1 oz sweet vermouth

½ oz extra-strong, freshly brewed covfefe coffee

½ oz Campari

➔ Stir until thoroughly chilled. Strain over fresh ice in a rocks glass and garnish with an orange peel.

Naomi Gordon-Loeb is the internship director and research editor at the Nation Institute.



RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE

by Megan Barnes

Three of these and you won't even care that your election was stolen. I find vodka to be a rather boring spirit to work with, so I added aquavit for that coriander/caraway flavor, St-Germain for a hint of lychee and pear, and citrus to balance out the cocktail.

➔ Add to a cocktail shaker with ice:

1 oz vodka

½ oz aquavit

½ oz St-Germain

¾ oz lemon juice

½ oz simple syrup

➔ Shake, strain, and serve in a coupe with a mint garnish.

Megan Barnes is the beverage director of Espita Mezcaleria in Washington, DC.

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Letters

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(continued from page 2)

from investment by and partnership with government. Today, the nations that are eating our lunch are not laissez-faire. They have strong industrial policies for investment and partnership. Do this, instead of shipping jobs away, and the people will support it. Denying people the vote is not likely to gain their support.

HARRY THORN
PHILADELPHIA

BLM Articles Matter

■ My thanks to Dani McClain for a broad-ranging article ["The Future of BLM," Oct. 9] with a wealth of information. I'm a white Vietnam vet who later went to jail protesting that genocidal war, and I'm a Bernie supporter. It was the brothers in Vietnam who gave me my first real political education. "Ain't no Vietnamese ever called me" the N-word, they said.

It is usual for a progressive writer writing about a progressive movement to analyze various factions, then treat each one separately: A, B, C. This has been done too often with Black Lives Matter. What McClain has done instead is provide a vibrant picture of an entire movement in process—warts and all. She has done us all a service. It's an article to read more than once, and then get active. ED LAMPMAN

In Manning Veritas

■ Many Americans will be eternally grateful to Chelsea Manning for revealing proof of multiple US war crimes perpetrated against Iraqi and Afghan civilians as well as on detainees and others ["Harvard's Shame," Oct. 9]. The same kind of war crimes took place in Vietnam, to our horror and shame. The mass killing of nonthreatening innocent civilians is intolerable and illegal here and internationally.

Mike Pompeo says that Manning endangered our troops in war zones, which is doubtful from what I've read. She has also been accused of treason for violating the Espionage Act. Others consider Manning a whistle-blower following her conscience.

Dramatic public objections against Manning's Harvard fellowship by Pompeo and Michael Morell were unwarranted and an insult to the intelligence of those of us who have followed the painful, ruthless, specious, endless "War on Terror." An informed public vigorously objects to war crimes executed in our name.

Chelsea Manning served seven years in prison in isolation. The remaining years of her sentence were commuted by President Obama. Manning should be given a chance to start a new life without military or government interference.

CHRIS JONSSON

■ I think it particularly juvenile to believe that large and influential universities, often on the government dole and on that of their less-than-liberal donors, would pursue any policies that might finally discourage their funding.

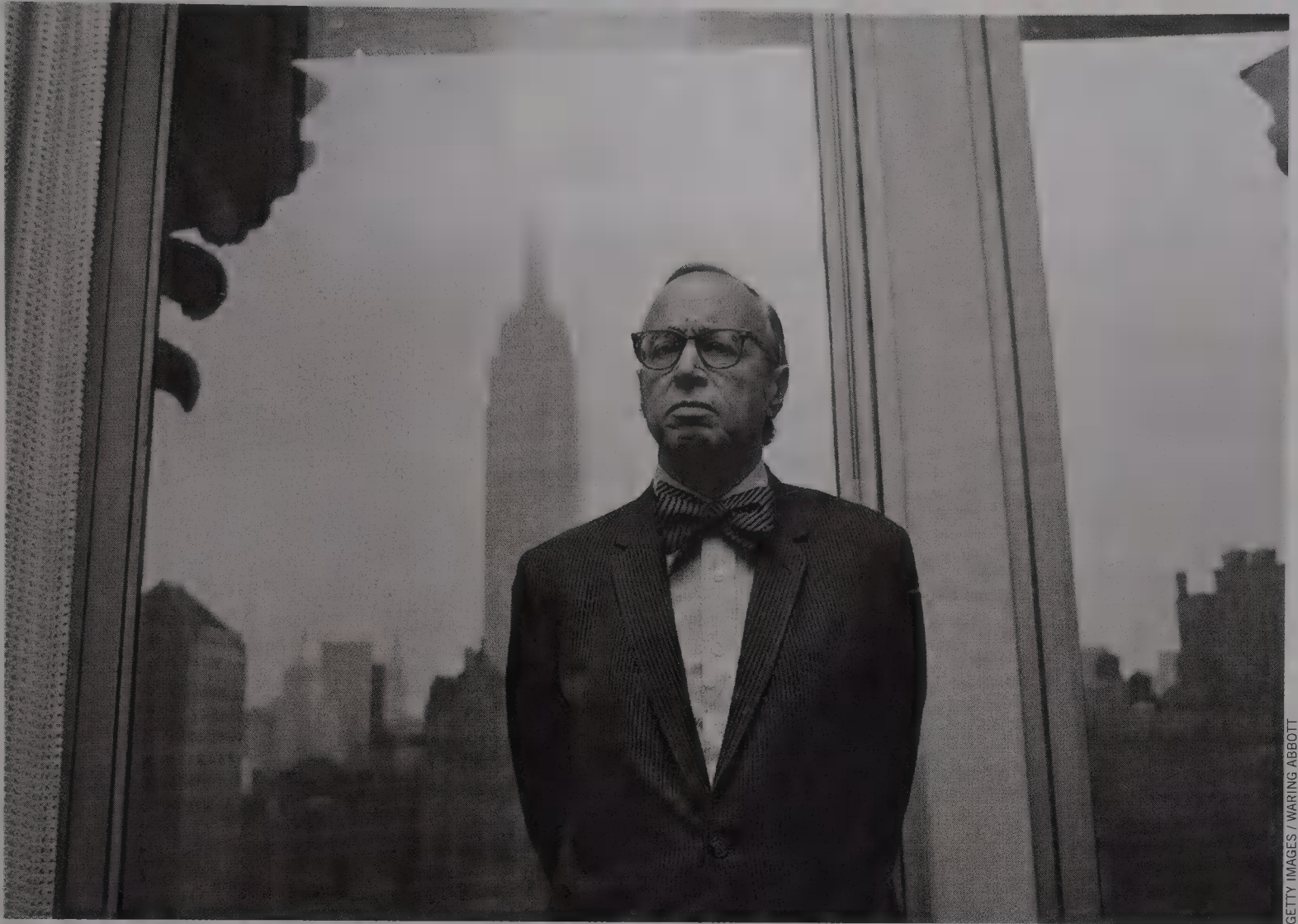
JAMES HANNAH

English Lessons

■ Gary Younge's column ["Winning Isn't Everything," Oct. 9] was great. I was in the United Kingdom during the election, and the level of support Jeremy Corbyn received from millennials in particular was astounding. The manifesto that he presented is a beacon that correlates closely to what Bernie Sanders offered. It is unfortunate that the US does not have a government that actively supports more than two political parties, as the UK does.

ROBERT ANDREWS

Books & the Arts.



Arthur Schlesinger, 1974.

THE POWER HISTORIAN

What was Arthur Schlesinger's "vital center"?

by DAVID MARCUS

In the years shortly after the Second World War, a new idea caught fire in the North Atlantic: consensus. The postwar settlement had divided the world into two spheres. In the West, liberal democracy—sometimes more social democratic, sometimes more laissez-faire—dominated; in the East, various forms of socialism and communism. Many intellectuals on the right and left decried this new age of conformity. Liberals, on the other hand, celebrated it. It marked their arrival: They had won the war of ideas, if not control.

Consensus soon caught on within the historical discipline. In the first half of

the 20th century, a group of Progressive Era historians—Frederick Jackson Turner, Charles Beard, V.L. Parrington—had argued that the history of American politics hinged on a series of social and political conflicts. In the prosperity and calm of the postwar years, historians embraced the opposite view: The American past was defined not by a contest over ideas and power but by ideological agreement—a long-standing fidelity to the liberal tradition.

Some within this consensus school made their case more critically than others (Richard Hofstadter acerbically observed that liberalism's dominance had

Schlesinger

The Imperial Historian

By Richard Aldous

W.W. Norton, 496 pp. \$29.95

created "a democracy in cupidity rather than a democracy in fraternity"). But a more popular school found in it the resources for a newly assertive Cold War liberalism: America's ability to find common ground was its "genius."

One of the few dissenting voices against the idea of consensus in these years was a young Harvard professor by the name of Arthur Meier Schlesinger Jr. Schlesinger was an outspoken liberal,

and so he was not, like Hofstadter, critical of liberalism's ascendancy. But as the son of a Progressive historian, he also argued that it had arrived there through conflict, not consensus. In his first major works of history—*The Age of Jackson* and his three-volume epic, *The Age of Roosevelt*—he set out to prove his thesis, documenting how a bellicose view of politics had created and sustained the Democratic Party, first with its rise under Andrew Jackson and then with its revival under Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. Schlesinger went even further in his 1949 Cold War treatise, *The Vital Center*: If liberals and social democrats were to beat back communists abroad and right-wing conservatives at home, they needed a more realistic view of politics. History and human reason alone would not do the work for those on the side of progress. Social change required the tactics of war: intrigue, argument, duplicity, and confrontation. This is what he meant by a *vital center*—not a politics of accommodation, but one of all-out attack.

Over the years, Schlesinger's vital center hasn't often been remembered this way. Because of his strident anticommunism and his close ties to postwar Democrats—in 1961, he was appointed special assistant to John F. Kennedy—many of his critics saw Schlesinger as *the* avatar of consensus. Later, when a young cohort of “New Democrats” and neoliberals (yes, they used the term) began to push the Democratic Party to the right, *The Vital Center* was invoked to justify their triangulations and compromises. (Shortly after signing welfare reform into law in 1996, Bill Clinton declared before an audience of DLC members: “we have clearly created a new center...the vital center.”)

As we learn from Richard Aldous's compellingly narrated and well-researched biography of Schlesinger, this was perhaps not so much an accident as an inadvertent result of his own ideas. Schlesinger always believed that his vital centrism was at the behest of a more egalitarian society—the welfare state in the United States and social democracy in Western Europe. But his instrumental view of politics was also always at risk of hardening into an ideology of its own. Like all forms of political and moral realism, the means could quickly become ends and power the sole prize.

Schlesinger appeared to recognize the dangers of this slippage and was often on guard against it. (Writing in a riposte to Clinton's DLC speech, he insisted that “If anyone really thinks that turning national and international problems over to state governments and the private market will end our troubles, they are due for further disillusionment.”)

But like his Jacksonian and New Deal heroes, Schlesinger also believed that power was the ultimate measure of politics, even if it was secured at the cost of one's own commitments. When Schlesinger and his wife were asked, shortly after his public scolding of Clinton, if they would join Bill and Hillary for dinner in Martha's Vineyard, the pair flew out the next week: Schlesinger knew the hand that fed him and other liberals. He was also flattered to once again be at the center of American politics, reporting in his journal that the whole affair was “an immensely pleasant, even cozy evening.” His only real complaint: “the drinks were served...very slowly.”

Schlesinger's preference for the power politics and company of presidents was not a part of his upbringing, which was largely defined by the Midwestern egalitarianism of his father, Arthur Meier Schlesinger Sr., and his father's generation of Progressive historians. Born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1917, Schlesinger descended from German-speaking Jewish and Catholic immigrants on his father's side and downwardly mobile WASPs on his mother's. American history and progressive politics ran on both sides. Schlesinger Sr. had studied under Charles Beard and James Harvey Robinson at Columbia and taught their breed of social history at Ohio State; he had also inherited their left-wing politics, throwing himself into a variety of radical causes, including a failed attempt to launch a third party. Schlesinger's mother was also politically engaged: An outspoken suffragette, she was—at least according to family lore—a relative of the Jacksonian historian and statesman George Bancroft.

Like many academic families, the Schlesingers moved around a lot during Arthur's childhood. From Columbus, they went to Iowa City, where Schlesinger Sr. held a teaching post until 1924, when Harvard and Frederick Jackson Turner came calling. In Cambridge, the family finally began to establish deeper roots. They built a large Colonial Revival in upscale Gray Gardens, and the Schlesinger men embraced the town's patrician tastes—bow ties, expensive eyewear, and summers at the Cape.

When Schlesinger arrived at Harvard, at the age of 15, he immediately became known as “little Arthur.” Like his father, he was drawn to history, studying with Perry Miller and writing his undergraduate thesis on the antebellum radical Orestes Brownson. His father had chosen the subject, and he would later also help to get the book published. But the twist on Brownson was

Schlesinger's own: He boldly argued that the radical agitator's writings and orations anticipated ideas found in Marx's work that came nearly a decade later.

But despite being drawn to the Progressives' radical historical interests, Schlesinger did not embrace their politics. In fact, for someone coming of age amid the upheaval and suffering of the Depression, he was remarkably uninterested in politics, spending most of his college years—and large sums of his father's money—on films, late-night drinking, and jazz clubs. (A whole chapter of his memoir—“Harvard College: What I Enjoyed”—is dedicated to documenting his budding epicureanism.) When he did engage with his era's heated controversies, he often showed a strong contempt for his peers' “undue political activism.” After a nationwide student “peace strike” was organized in 1935, Schlesinger applauded the “young Princetonians [who] established the Veterans of Future Wars.” When another student group formed to repeal a loyalty oath imposed on Massachusetts college professors, he confessed in his journal: “Those who want the barricades can have them but I don't.”

On this, he diverged considerably from his father and his father's generation of historians. While the Progressives championed how working Americans made their own history, and while they often at considerable risk to their own careers involved themselves in radical causes and movements, little Arthur identified with those in power—in particular, Roosevelt and the New Dealers. “So far as I was concerned,” he later recalled, “the New Deal was the main event, Marxism a sideshow, irrelevant to the American future.”

Writing never presented a problem for Schlesinger. Between his 1939 debut on Brownson and his 50th birthday, he published 11 books—many 400 to 500 pages long—and hundreds of articles and book reviews. In the 40 years that followed, he continued the pace, publishing seven more books and writing thousands of journal entries, which two of his sons, Andrew and Stephen, posthumously published in 2007.

But what made Schlesinger's output so remarkable was not only the quality of his prose or how he synthesized other scholarship into bold new glosses. It was also that he wrote so much, and so well, while juggling demanding day jobs and moonlight responsibilities. Between his graduation from college and 1963, when he left the White House, Schlesinger was rarely just a historian. During the Second World War, he



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was a propagandist and intelligence analyst, working for the Office of Wartime Information and the CIA's precursor, the Office of Strategic Services. In the early postwar years, he postponed a Harvard appointment to work as a journalist in Washington, where he wrote a series of well-circulated articles and was an active member in a variety of liberal anticommunist fronts, including Americans for Democratic Action and the Congress for Cultural Freedom. (In an uncharacteristically underdeveloped aside, Aldous notes that in these years Schlesinger also was "still on the books of the CIA as a consultant.")

But Schlesinger's main distraction was electoral politics, especially Democratic Party politics. Through the relationships he cultivated in postwar Washington, he found himself enlisted in Averell Harriman's bid for president in 1952, then Adlai Stevenson's in 1956, and then—most fatefully—in Kennedy's 1960 campaign, for which he was awarded a post in the White House.

Throughout these years, Schlesinger often hid his political ambitions behind his scholarly bow ties and credentials. But a considerable amount of cunning—and sometimes outright deception—paved his way from Harvard Yard to the White House. When he jumped from Harriman's sinking ship to Stevenson's more promising one, he shared, as Aldous tells us, "inside knowledge about Harriman to help Stevenson knock him out of the race." And when he ditched Stevenson for JFK, he recruited a group of fellow Stevenson intellectuals—John Kenneth Galbraith and Henry Steele Commager among them—to publicly endorse Kennedy and thereby prevent old Adlai from considering a third run.

Schlesinger's betrayals of Harriman and Stevenson stung both men greatly. They also haunted Schlesinger, who knew how much he owed to their early confidence in him. (Of his Stevenson betrayal, he confessed: "I felt sick about it, and still feel guilty and sad.") But Schlesinger also came to believe that his choices were justified: If liberals were to be close to power—if they were one day to *be* in power—they had to engage in its brutal "power realities."

In a diary entry distinguished by its novelistic flourishes, Schlesinger recorded a conversation he had with Harriman in 1978, when the two men sought out a tentative rapprochement. Observing a framed portrait of FDR hanging in Schlesinger's entryway, Harriman "paused for a moment

and said, 'You know why he was such a great President?... Because he did not yield to feelings of personal loyalty. He picked men, gave them jobs to do, gave them plenty of discretion. If they did the job, well, fine; if not, he cut them off without a second thought.'" Sensing that Roosevelt was not Harriman's only target, Schlesinger cited Emerson: "whatever else could be said for or against him, everyone had to admit that Napoleon 'understood his business.'" One suspects Schlesinger would have defended his own actions with a similar retort: that he, too, understood his business.



But it wasn't just from his experiences in politics that Schlesinger began to develop a better understanding of the power politics required of American liberals; it was also through his historical scholarship. What Schlesinger admired about the "tough-minded Jacksonians" like George Bancroft and Nathaniel Hawthorne and the young cadre of New Dealers who became the protagonists of *The Age of Roosevelt* was that they represented the ideal of the "action-intellectual": They may have been driven by a set of commitments, but they recognized that American politics was ultimately a war of will more than one of ideas.

This was perhaps most explicit in the narrative structure of *The Age of Roosevelt*. After tracking the failure of the old laissez-faire liberalism in his first volume, and the rise of a new idealistic liberalism in his second, Schlesinger turned to the "battle of the century" between the New Dealers and their opponents. In doing so, he sought to vindicate FDR's more ruthless tactics. Faced with a hostile Supreme Court and an agitated business class, Roosevelt threatened to pack the Court. He and his advisers waged a war against their critics from inside the White House and decried the business community as "the enemy within our gates." Roosevelt, Schlesinger wrote, chose to "take a progressive stand and force the fight on that line."

This was largely the kind of class war that his father and the Progressive historians had celebrated. But while the main combatants for the Progressives were hardworking Americans and elites, Schlesinger saw the fight as between those already in power: FDR and the New Dealers, who wielded political power, and those, like Wendell Willkie and William Randolph Hearst, who wielded economic and cultural power. The battle of the century was on; it just had very little to do with most Americans. "All politics,"

Schlesinger argued in *The Age of Roosevelt's* third volume, "begins and ends with power."

Schlesinger's view of American politics as a brutal scramble for power was the core of perhaps his most famous book, *The Vital Center*. First and foremost a work of Cold War polemic against the threat of communism abroad, the book also directed its ire to liberals and the left at home. Inspired by the "Augustinian forebodings" of Perry Miller and Reinhold Niebuhr, Schlesinger argued that liberals' and socialists' faith in human progress and reason had blinded them to the fallibility and tragedy baked into all forms of human activity. No society was perfectible because no individual was, and no set of liberal or egalitarian politics was realizable without a more hardheaded view of politics and political morality. To beat back liberalism's enemies required ideological flexibility and a willingness to sacrifice principle for power.

Of course, many liberals and socialists had already come to this realization during the Depression and the Second World War, forming "popular fronts" that transcended ideological differences in order to face down the economic and geopolitical crises of their age. Likewise, many of the liberal and left-wing intellectuals Schlesinger criticized—figures like John Dewey and the Fabians—subscribed to a view of politics that was far from doctrinaire and that was defined by an instrumentalism that made experience and consequence key measures of success (an instrumentalism that, as Randolph Bourne noted, also proved willing to sacrifice ideals for power).

But Schlesinger wasn't writing history; he was writing for a cause—a vital liberal centrism that drew its "strength from a realistic conception of man" and that "dedicated itself to problems as they come." This was not a defense of the ideological center as Clinton and the New Democrats imagined; it was a call to arms for liberals, social democrats, and, yes, socialists—in *The Vital Center*, Schlesinger writes with admiration of Karl Kautsky, Eugene Debs, and Leon Blum—to honestly reckon with what was required of them. His vital centrism was, therefore, not a politics of moderation but a politics of war. "It believes in attack," he noted near the book's end, "and out of attack will come passionate intensity."

Part of Schlesinger's militancy, one suspects, came from the fact that he had spent a lifetime living down the taunt of being an "egghead." Part of it was also a matter of wanting to be liked by those who perceived

the world as a set of power relations (he assiduously courted people like Henry Kissinger, and it wasn't lost on Schlesinger that Kennedy, who had been two years behind him at Harvard, had ignored him throughout their undergraduate years). But it was also because Schlesinger had come to believe that liberals had been hampered by a set of dogmas—a faith in human nature, in historical progress, and in the possibilities of collective action—that had been discredited by the first half of the 20th century. If they were to succeed in its second half, they'd have to embrace the responsibility and sometimes the sins of power.

Early in *The Vital Center*, Schlesinger quotes Virginia congressman and slaveholder John Randolph of Roanoke: “power alone can limit power.” Schlesinger certainly approved of little else in Randolph's politics—among other things, Randolph lamented the loss of a permanent landed gentry in America—but on this statement he was in clear agreement.

One of the dangers of Schlesinger's vital center was that, over the long haul, its realism and power politics could become ends in themselves. This was Bourne's warning about the instrumentalism practiced by many of Dewey's acolytes during the Progressive Era and in the lead-up to the First World War, and it was also the central lesson of North Atlantic politics since the 1980s, when out-of-power “Third Way” liberals, social democrats, and socialists disavowed their parties' egalitarian programs in favor of policies—deregulation, regressive tax schemes, free-trade agreements, means-tested welfare—that they believed would help them win over conservative voters.

Schlesinger may not have liked this new Third Way; his way was that of a robust social democracy that could stand between communism and laissez-faire capitalism. But the liberal power politics that undergirded his vital center was always at risk of mission creep. Tactics could become strategy and power could become the key measure by which liberals and the left assessed themselves—which is exactly what happened with the New Democrats and the rise of a new generation of center-left politicians in Europe. Prioritizing immediate electoral gains over long-term goals, they abandoned the state-centered rhetoric that kept the center of liberal democracies from creeping back to the extremes of the free-market right. By heralding risk-taking entrepreneurs, flexible labor policies, and deregulation, they also

undermined the very conditions upon which their base had been composed and sustained. As a theory of politics, their strain of vital centrism proved highly effective in the short term and devastating over the long: It was full of Pyrrhic victories in which center-left politicians won on platforms that undercut their parties' future.

To his credit, Schlesinger began to recognize the risks by the late 1960s and early 1970s. After three heady years in the Kennedy administration—which he recorded in *A Thousand Days*—he became a bitter critic of the Johnson administration as it shifted away from its early Great Society programs into the brutality and morass of the Vietnam War. (“The fight for equal opportunity for the Negro, the war against poverty, the struggle to save the cities, the improvement of our schools,” he lamented in 1967, were all “starved for the sake of Vietnam.”) Likewise, the craven power plays of Richard Nixon and Schlesinger's old dining partner, Henry Kissinger, caused him to grow ever more wary of the realist presidential politics that he'd once heralded.

The frustration and anger that Schlesinger felt toward the Johnson and Nixon administrations also directed his attention to a new project: an effort to understand what had gone wrong with the American presidency. Published as *The Imperial Presidency* in 1973, the book rivaled almost all of his early histories in its originality and ability to synthesize historical scholarship. It also far surpassed them in its temporal scope. While his earlier work had zoomed in on moments of heroic presidential action—such as the Jacksonian and New Deal years—he now told a much darker and longer story about American power: how, starting with the early Republic, a pattern of “presidential usurpation” had caused the executive branch to colonize the powers of other branches of government.

The Imperial Presidency also proved to be Schlesinger's most self-critical work. He didn't pull any punches when it came to reassessing the excesses of his presidential heroes. In it, Jackson came off as more of a tyrant than a radical democrat, while Roosevelt's use of the White House to wage a war against his critics and his threat to override the courts looked ever more sinister in the years after Nixon and Watergate. So, too, in the wake of Vietnam, did Kennedy's expansion of executive privilege when it came to national security. “Alas,” Schlesinger acknowledged, “Kennedy's action [during the Cuban missile crisis] should have been celebrated as an exception,” not “enshrined

as a rule.... This was in great part because it so beautifully fulfilled both the romantic ideal of a strong President and the prophecy of split-second presidential decision in the nuclear age.... But one of its legacies was the imperial conception of the Presidency that brought the republic so low in Vietnam.”

Schlesinger's work in his later years was mixed. Much of his scholarship after *The Imperial Presidency* tended to circle around conclusions made in his early career or, worse, surrender to the temptations of hagiography, such as in *Robert F. Kennedy and His Times*. Once living in New York, he also spent perhaps too much time basking in his newfound celebrity, earning the nickname “the swinging soothsayer” from *Time* magazine, and carousing and drinking with the likes of Norman Mailer, Andy Warhol, Lauren Bacall, Anjelica Huston, and Shirley MacLaine. (“I find great pleasure in intelligent actresses,” he confided in his diary.)

Aldous does not focus on these years with the same level of intensity or care for detail that he directs toward Schlesinger's earlier years, dedicating only 50 or so pages to the last four decades of his life. One can understand why: Schlesinger's salad days ran parallel to the heyday of mid-20th-century liberalism; they were more exciting times, at least for Schlesinger. But one suspects that Aldous, a contributing editor to *The American Interest*, is also more interested in tracking liberal realism's rise instead of its fall.

Nonetheless, despite the brevity of Aldous's last chapters, one does get the sense that Schlesinger was trying, in his later years, to come to terms with the bellicose liberalism he'd championed much of his life. Something had gone terribly wrong with his vital center, both at home and abroad. Some battles may have been won, but the wars—both metaphoric and literal—had almost all been lost. Vietnam and the Cold War helped bankrupt the good created by the second wave of social-democratic policies enacted under Kennedy and Johnson. The Democrats' ideological flexibility and triangulations may have gotten them back into the White House, first in the late '70s and then in the 1990s—but at what cost?

Thinking about what he got wrong in *The Vital Center*, Schlesinger confessed in his journal that he'd celebrated the propulsive economics of the postwar years too uncritically—and without thinking about those left behind. Likewise, he admitted, “the Cold War and the obvious cruelties of communism made us all tend to defend our

system as a system. And it is undeniable that the system as such tolerates a continuing set of injustices and evils."

Schlesinger may have happily dined with the Clintons, but Clinton's policies during his first term—welfare reform, in particular—"infuriated and depressed" him, and by 1996 he had "resolved to stop defending Clinton in the future." Unlike FDR and the New Dealers, who took a progressive stand and forced the fight on that line, Clinton and the New Democrats allowed the center of American politics to move to the right.

Schlesinger always paired the moral pessimism of Augustine and Niebuhr with a surprising amount of faith in the possibilities of history. It was not that he believed social progress was inevitable, but that he liked to emphasize the good in the midst of the bad. This historical sanguinity was what led him to elide the racism and violence of Jacksonian democracy and to subdue any skepticism he might have had about the opportunism of both FDR and JFK. It was this "politics of hope"—a phrase that he used to title a book on the New Frontier—that also allowed him to argue in the Reagan years that American history cycled between a politics of progress and affirmative government and one of regress and chaos. In the face of all that was rotten, the good may yet still arise. Schlesinger never abandoned this politics of hope, but he did begin to worry about the power politics and realism upon which it relied.

Two of his last pieces before his death in 2007 seemed to capture his growing despair. Both were on jaded liberal action-intellectuals: the editor and novelist William Dean Howells and the historian Henry Adams. Having spent the first half of their lives in the thrall of Republican reform, they had, by the late 19th century, found themselves repulsed by its corruption and excesses. Howells felt particularly anguished over the four Haymarket anarchists who were hanged for crimes they didn't commit (a fifth killed himself in jail). Adams, whose grandfather and great-grandfather had been presidents, soured on the crude intertwining of money and politics in Gilded Age Washington and abandoned the city and its politics to teach history at Harvard.

Both spent the last years of their lives increasingly distraught over the trajectory of their own liberal ideals. After Haymarket, Schlesinger wrote, Howells "tried to get other writers to join in condemning a palpable miscarriage of justice," but "no one came along...and [he] was denounced by the respectable press." Of Adams's disenchantment, Schlesinger was more succinct: "What had gone wrong?" ■



INTERNATIONAL TERRITORY

Three new books map the ambiguities of the UN's extraterritorial status

by **ATOSSA ARAXIA ABRAHAMIAN**

Every year, the United Nations General Assembly descends upon New York City, bringing with it traffic jams, crowded subways, diplomatic mishaps, and, in recent years, some tens of millions' worth of public spending. Given the trouble—and today, a president whose only real interest in foreign policy seems to be alienating other nations—it's hard to believe that ordinary Americans once saw the prospect of hosting the UN in their country as a benefit, not a costly liability.

Yet that was the prevailing sentiment in 1945, when the organization was searching for a place to settle. It was a different time:

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The men and women whom today's right-wing politicians revile as "globalists" enjoyed a slightly more flattering profile. Intellectuals were more inclined to condemn nationalism strongly and without hesitation, calling it "power-hunger tempered by self-deception" (Orwell) or "an infantile disease...the measles of mankind" (Einstein). World peace was largely deemed a cause worthy of intellectual inquiry and charitable giving, rather than the subject of resigned shrugs.

It was in this atmosphere, and from the ashes of two world wars, that the United Nations rose: if not a symbol of peace, then, to paraphrase one of its architects, at least a "workshop" for it. But rootless cosmopolitanism isn't particularly conducive to establishing a functional bureaucracy, so the UN had to go in search of a "forever" home—and

after a lengthy debate about the best place for its headquarters, it opted for the United States. Curiously, this was the result not solely of American strong-arming, but also of the international community's reasoning that the United States would be less apt to "return to its previous isolationist tendencies" if the UN was on its turf. As New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia put it, the organization would "bring right home to us the troubles and the problems of the entire world, and also bring home to us our responsibility."

The next question was precisely where in the United States to site the fledgling organization. Some 150 different US localities, from the Black Hills to the Great Smoky Mountains, volunteered to become "the new capital of the world." A businessman from South Dakota pledged that in his state, "no large city will absorb your identity." Minneapolis made a dubious claim that it had an "ideal climate." La Guardia, while in favor of locating the UN in New York, refused to participate in the "scramble of cheap competition," so it was up to his successor, William O'Dwyer, to do the city's bidding.

Once New York was decided on, the search for a location was as complex as any of the city's real-estate transactions. Scouts surveyed several sites in the area, including the Sperry gyroscope plant in Lake Success, Long Island, and Flushing Meadows Park in the borough of Queens, where the UN was temporarily housed. Parts of the Hudson Valley and Westchester County were also considered, to the great chagrin of some residents, until, in a last-minute move, the Rockefeller family decided to donate \$8.5 million toward the purchase of a stretch of slaughterhouses known as "Blood Alley" on Manhattan's East Side (they were assured that they would not pay tax on the gift).

In the postwar environment, the symbolism of a slaughterhouse turned into the headquarters for an international peacekeeping organization was fitting. And ever since, writes Pamela Hanlon in her new book about the UN and New York City's evolving relationship, "the two have stuck together—the ever-confident city, never wanting to appear overly enamored of its international guest, and the UN, never intimidated by its cosmopolitan host."

How many architects does it take to change a light bulb on international territory? The United Nations wagered 10. The idea was that one architect would represent each major region of the world. Building the UN was an unprecedented exercise, not just

A Worldly Affair

New York, the United Nations, and the Story Behind Their Unlikely Bond

By Pamela Hanlon

Fordham University Press. 248 pp. \$29.95

Renovation

By Nancy Davenport

Cabinet. 304 pp. \$28

What to Do About the UN

By Claudia Rossett

Encounter. 48 pp. \$5.99

in design but in diplomacy. Constructing the halls for global consensus from the ground up was one thing; building them in a way that attained the globe's consensus was another.

The architects included Ernest Cormier of Canada; Liang Sicheng of China; and Wallace K. Harrison, an American who led the panel of designers. Their task was complicated somewhat by the presence of Le Corbusier, who was known for correcting his own interpreter's English and insisted on taking credit for the building's design when it was his protégé, Oscar Niemeyer, who drafted the winning model.

The language that the architects used is telling: They were making plans for a holistic world architecture, as opposed to a political international style (today, they might opt for a global approach). And because of its prominence, the new Secretariat—a marble-and-glass structure 39 stories high—was the subject of much discussion when it was finished in 1951. Frank Lloyd Wright called the main building "a super-crate to ship a fiasco to hell." In *The New Yorker*, Lewis Mumford likened it to "a mirror" in both the positive and negative senses of the term.

Both were right. In the preface to artist Nancy Davenport's book of photographs documenting the building's recent renovations, Reinaldo Laddaga writes: "From the outset, a certain lack of definition affected the organization that the buildings housed.... Universalist ideals ('world cooperation,' 'world peace') were supposed to be advanced here, but the process of embodying them in documents and plans, offices and calendars, resulted in a long, complex improvisation at the end of which emerged an entity that was to be seen alternatively as necessary (however dysfunctional) or completely crippled by bureaucracy and organizational incoherence."

One of the biggest criticisms of the UN is precisely that—that it is of this world,

but too often far from Earth and even farther from its neighbors. Hanlon, who lived blocks from the site for many years, writes as a friend and a neighbor. She doesn't hide her affection for the somewhat charmless neighborhood of Turtle Bay; she also picks up on detail and the meaning of small things—a statue, a park, a pedestrian walkway—in a way that only a local can.

This approach is successful in that it gives the sweeping developments surrounding the UN a particular locality and tells the story of postwar internationalism in a readable, human way—exactly what Mayor La Guardia had hoped for. But the real strength of Hanlon's approach is that it juxtaposes America's inequalities with the UN's multiculturalism.

In the 1960s, African diplomats came face to face with these inequalities while working in New York: To avoid the everyday racism of the city, many "took to wearing their national dress to distinguish themselves from New York blacks," Hanlon writes. One diplomat's wife confided that her husband "wouldn't let her wear American-style clothing because he was 'afraid I would be taken for an American negro and perhaps I would come to some harm.'" Finding adequate housing for a multiethnic staff presented a similar set of challenges—not just because of high costs and low vacancy rates, but because landlords extended their discriminatory policies to foreign dignitaries and their families.

These encounters between the local and the global further reveal the striking tensions between the social status of black dignitaries and that of African Americans. The United Nations may have been an international territory with lofty values, but nothing could shield its officials and workers from the racism and violence that persisted outside its compound.

Hanlon's approach nevertheless has its share of weaknesses. Even though she deftly captures the way in which the UN became a part of the city, a fascinating set of hypotheticals goes unaddressed: Does the UN really need New York, and does the city need the UN? Would we all be better off if it had made its home elsewhere? And what should residents of the city—and citizens of the world—hope for from the institution at a time when its role in world affairs is being marginalized by nationalist and corporate interests?

In that respect, discussions about displaced playgrounds and awkward zoning sometimes read like missed opportunities

to explore the more esoteric legal underpinnings of what it means for the UN to be inviolable and extraterritorial, and yet situated in a specific city.

It's true that the UN has its own postage stamps, which are valid only within its buildings—a quirk, and a charming one at that. But diplomatic immunity, for instance, is a much graver, more nuanced, and more interesting matter than just a bunch of unpaid parking tickets by diplomats. It enables labor violations, human trafficking, and other infractions that fly in the face of the UN's mission, but it also facilitates diplomacy in the most fundamental way: by granting some version of “safe passage” to official visitors in a foreign land.

Similarly, the principle of inviolability—that the UN is in many respects outside the jurisdiction of local courts and police—is only discussed in the context of building codes. These might be less tangible concepts than the ones that Hanlon tackles, but they are fundamental to understanding how the UN works, not just in New York City but also in the world.

They are central as well to critiques of the UN, such as Claudia Rossett's screed, *What to Do About the UN*. Rossett, a former member of *The Wall Street Journal's* editorial board, has been a prolific critic of the organization for several decades; she vehemently objects to the UN's special status, which she says contributes to a culture of impunity. “While proposing to act as moral arbiter and shepherd of peace and prosperity for the planet, the U.N. is itself exempt from law and justice,” she writes. “These immunities also translate into a considerable degree of secrecy at the U.N., which cranks out endless information on its labors for humanity but has no compelling incentive to answer questions it doesn't like.”

Many of Rossett's objections are political: She believes that the United Nations and its backers enable “despotic” regimes through the “moral equivalence” of equal representation. “When tyrants or their ministers parade across the U.N. stage in New York at the General Assembly opening every September, sandwiched between the speakers from America, Britain, and Japan, before a golden backdrop, one of the implicit messages to their oppressed populations back home is that their rulers, in the eyes of the world, are legitimate,” she writes.

But more fundamentally, she sees no good reason for the UN to be shielded from criticism—and legal action—simply on account of a charter written many decades

ago and based on events from the previous century. If Rossett had her way, the Trump administration would adopt a hard line on funding the UN's continued presence in New York, start planning an exit strategy, and bring capitalist and free-market values to the humanitarian organization to make it less wasteful, more effective, and, presumably, closer in line with the goals of its biggest donor, the United States. “A basic element of the democracy and capitalism that made America great is competition,” Rossett writes. “Are things really that different in world affairs?”

While the inviolable and monolithic nature of the UN—the site of historic speeches, epic meltdowns, and landmark agreements—was never intended to be a great example of free markets at work, it did leave an economic footprint on the city. It now employs some 11,000 people in New York—a statistic that would have been felt more significantly in a smaller or poorer locality.

The big city (and its proudly blasé population) did serve as a fitting, even cinematic backdrop to some of the UN's biggest scandals and controversies. In the 1950s, the red scare swept the Secretariat, and a number of employees were accused of being communists. In the 1960s, traffic, parking, and congestion pitted locals against diplomats, provoking angry *Daily News* editorials and headlines declaring that “Laws Are Meant for Other People.” In the 1970s, New York Mayor Ed Koch, along with much of the city's sizable Jewish community, was furious that the General Assembly had declared Zionism a form of racism in their own backyard. Koch became known for his vitriolic barbs against the UN (to the point that several delegates worried that the mayor's 40th-anniversary gift to the organization—a Tiffany paperweight in a baby-blue box—might be a bomb), and he once declared that “if the UN would leave New York, nobody would ever hear of it again.”

By 1995, as the UN was preparing to celebrate its 50th year in New York, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali characterized the relationship as a “romance”—but in the eyes of some New Yorkers, they were ready for a breakup. “Long gone is the heady post-Cold War glow of the early 1990s,” writes Rossett. “That notion was eclipsed in short order by the genocidal slaughters of the mid-1990s, while U.N. peacekeepers looked on, in Rwanda and at Srebrenica. Any lingering faith in the U.N.

as a guardian of world integrity should have been smothered by the global cloud of graft that mushroomed out of the U.N.'s 1996–2003 Oil-for-Food relief program for Saddam Hussein's U.N.-sanctioned Iraq.”

The Secretariat building itself also needed an overhaul—its heating, electrical, and ventilation systems were badly outdated—but the renovation costs hovered around the \$1.6 billion mark. Enter Donald J. Trump, at the time an opportunistic developer who owned a tower up the street, at 845 United Nations Plaza (the condo's World Bar remains a popular hangout for UN employees). Trump declared that he could renovate the building for around half the projected cost, and in February 2006 his contractor, HRH Construction, set up shop in a UN conference room to analyze the plans and find a way to slash the bill. They failed to produce a lower estimate, and, as Hanlon reports, “for a while, at least, Trump's public boasting stopped.”

Trump moved on to bully new targets; meanwhile, the renovation took seven years to complete. Photographer Nancy Davenport was there almost the entire time, interviewing construction crews, immortalizing graffiti and debris, reminiscing with staff, and memorializing the “skeleton” of the structure before it was built up again. Davenport's photographs help to excavate parts of the UN's institutional memory that don't make it into the history books: inside jokes among the construction crews, an interpreter's confessions about her high blood pressure, the blank stares of bureaucrats at the General Assembly juxtaposed with the focused gaze of the janitorial staff. Scaffolding features prominently in these photos, reminding us that the institution has not only propped up genocidal regimes but has also provided the structure for a kind of peace, or at least stasis. The sheer physicality of her subject, then, contributes to Hanlon's project: a grounding, or territorialization, of the UN.

Davenport also reminds us about the people without whom the UN would not exist, and in transcripts and portraits she notes a certain idealism that has endured in the hearts of much of the staff—if not in the institution itself—over the years. One of her images, at once touching and kitschy, shows a Benetton-esque group of children with their hands on a globe, posing earnestly for the camera in what appears to be the early 1990s. These are the children who sell postcards at Christmas and trick-or-treat for small change on Halloween, collecting pennies that, Claudia Rossett implies, are just as

likely to be siphoned off into the pockets of corrupt foreign officials as they are to help feed starving orphans.

I could have been one of the kids in that photo. I am entirely a product of the United Nations: Both my parents spent the majority of their careers working there, I attended UN-adjacent schools, and I spent sick days wandering the halls of the Secretariat in Geneva and marveling at the building's hidden doors and sonorous hallways.

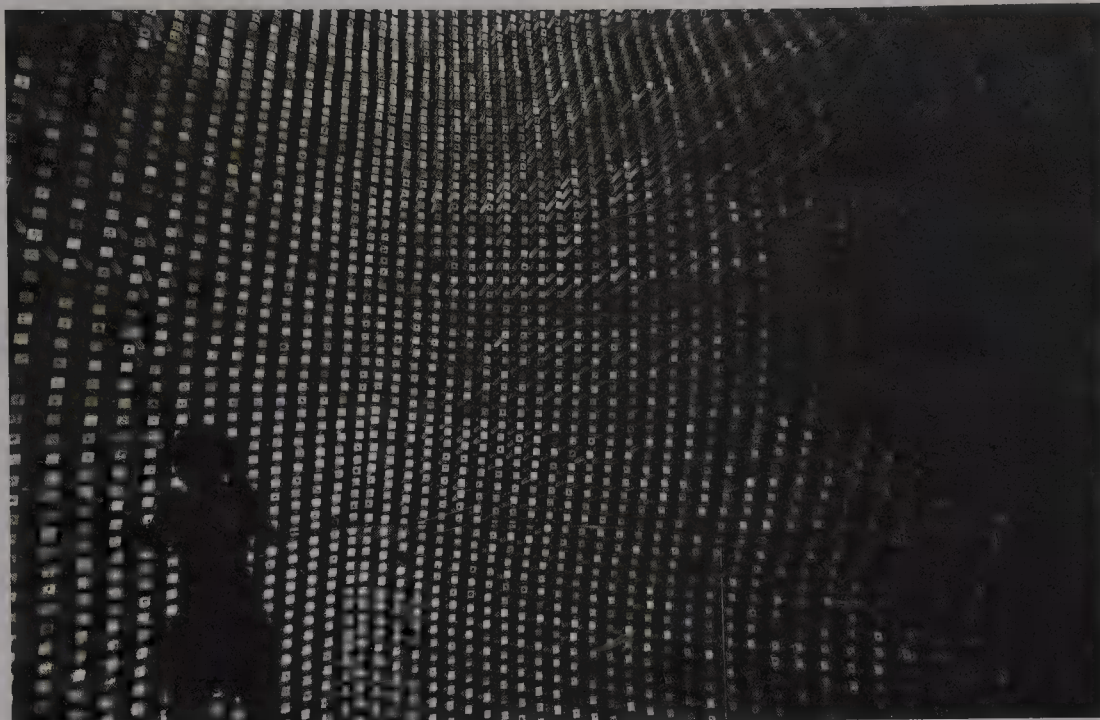
I've also spent my whole life in UN cities: Geneva, Paris (home to UNESCO and other agencies), and New York. Today, I call the UN my country and New York City my home—yet I've also grown sympathetic to the idea that New York in particular brings out the worst in UN people: vanity, self-importance, snobbery (these are qualities that New Yorkers and international civil servants share, to some degree). At the same time, the UN feeds New Yorkers' cosmopolitan provincialism: the feeling that New York is, in some sense, its own country.

Hanlon casts the symbiotic relationship between the organization and the city as a net positive: In good times and bad, the UN would not be the UN without New York, and vice versa. But while she's absolutely right in pointing out that the relationship is mutually beneficial, there's also a compelling argument to be made that it would have been better for the city, the country, and the world—not to mention for the organization itself—if the United Nations had taken up the Great Smoky Mountains on their original bid.

Would we have world peace? Probably not. Would the enthusiastic internationalism of the postwar years have prevailed? It's impossible to tell. Would Donald Trump be president? At the very least, his renovation contractors would have been out of a gig. It's not particularly useful to dwell on these hypotheticals, but it's still hard not to wonder where we'd be had the UN settled in a red state or a rural region, and shared its considerable institutional gifts—multicultural values, a sense of engagement with what's happening abroad, and, crucially, lots and lots of jobs—with a host city that resembled its country far more than New York ever will.

That's why it's a shame that the UN made its headquarters in a city that was already about as worldly as can be. Forgive the arrogance, but: We don't really need it. And the UN? It doesn't much need New York, either. ■

A SHIMMERY CUBE



UK pavilion at the 2010 Shanghai World Expo.

What is the science behind how we experience architecture?

by PAUL GOLDBERGER

De gustibus non est disputandum is clearly not Sarah Williams Goldhagen's motto. She is quite happy to dispute matters of taste, at least so far as architecture is concerned, and has just written an entire book intended to do just that: to tell people that much of what they think they like is doing them no good, and that a better-designed environment would make their lives more satisfying.

There are many ways in which to read *Welcome to Your World: How the Built Environment Shapes Our Lives*. The least charitable is to take Goldhagen as a bit of a scold. After all, in the opening pages of this long and thorough treatise, she tells us that the problem with how we understand architecture "is an information deficit. If people understand just how much design matters, they'd care." But we can also read her admonishments as representative of her ambitions here: Goldhagen believes that she is coming to us with news of recent scientific discoveries that will change the way we think about and experience buildings. "As you read what follows, what you know and how you think about your world will shift,"

Paul Goldberger is the author, most recently, of Building Art: The Life and Work of Frank Gehry.

Welcome to Your World

How the Built Environment Shapes Our Lives

By Sarah Williams Goldhagen
Harper. 384 pp. \$40

she writes. "It will become a different place than it was before you opened to this page."

Clearly, Goldhagen is not a writer who approaches her subject with a sense of tentativeness. But once you get a little deeper into this book, it becomes clear that her hubris (if we can call it that) coexists with a sense of earnestness and civilizing intentions. Goldhagen is an engaging and generous writer, alert to the subtleties of human experience, and she has written *Welcome to Your World* with a desire to genuinely reveal something new to us. Armed with relatively recent discoveries in neuroscience, Goldhagen wants to give us a scientific explanation about how and why people experience different kinds of rooms, different kinds of colors and materials and textures, and different kinds of streets and cities in widely varying ways. If, until now, we—architects, critics, building dwellers—have had to guess what makes certain places attractive or comfortable or exciting or awe-inspiring, we now have some scientific basis

for our reactions: what Goldhagen calls a new paradigm, which “holds that much of what and how people think is a function of our living in the kinds of bodies we do.”

Among the many examples provided in *Welcome to Your World*, Goldhagen cites a pair of temporary pavilions built in 2010 that she believes are particularly instructive. One is in London’s Hyde Park, by the architect Jean Nouvel; the other is on the grounds of the Shanghai World Expo, by the designer and architect Thomas Heatherwick. Nouvel’s pavilion was that year’s iteration of an annual project by the Serpentine Gallery in which a prominent architect who has never constructed a building in Britain is invited to design a summer pavilion in the park. What Nouvel came up with was starkly angular and bright red, an abstraction of diagonal, slanted walls intended, the architect said, to evoke the setting summer sun. Heatherwick’s design, a shimmering cube made up of 60,000 extruded Plexiglas rods, looked even less like a conventional building and more like a glowing porcupine. Heatherwick wanted it to conjure Britain’s rich array of green spaces, and so he placed a different kind of seed from the Kew Gardens Millennium Seed Bank in each rod and called his structure the Seed Cathedral.

Goldhagen tells us that she responded in very different ways to the two pavilions. Nouvel’s, she tells us, brought forth a wave of anxiety. “An all-red environment shifts the human pituitary gland into high gear, raising blood pressure and pulse rate, increasing muscular tension, and stimulating sweat glands. Such a place can energize and excite us, to be sure, but it’s the kind of excitement that’s coupled with agitated tension and can easily slip into anger and aggression.” The Heatherwick design, on the other hand, she found more soothing. “Each individual rod also held a tiny light source, so that at night, the feathery Seed Cathedral displayed literally 60,000 points of light, softly swaying in the wind.” The result, she concluded, “inspired gentle delight.”

Others have contrasted buildings like this in much the same manner, but what is noteworthy here is that Goldhagen isn’t using what she calls “embodied cognition”—the standard, normal responses of most human beings to particular environments—to argue against radical designs and in favor of conventional ones. Both Nouvel and Heatherwick produced original and unusual structures, and Goldhagen wants only to report on which one is more comfortable to experience.

Most claims that humans respond naturally to certain shapes have really been arguments for traditional building, many of them influenced by the writings of the architectural theorist Christopher Alexander, author of *A Pattern Language* and *The Timeless Way of Building*. Goldhagen deftly tosses the whole idea aside as “a pastiche of sociology and nostalgia”; she is not writing a screed in favor of traditional building, but rather wants to help us understand that comfort doesn’t always correlate with what’s conventional.

This doesn’t mean that Goldhagen is willing to let architects have their way with the world. She comes down as hard as anyone on Zaha Hadid and Daniel Libeskind, for example, much of whose work is known for the same sharp angles and clashing lines that provoked her ire with Nouvel’s pavilion. She is unsparing when it comes to those buildings that she believes cause discomfort because of their neurological effects, stating: “Humans respond to compositions dominated by sharp, irregular, angled forms with discomfort, even fear.” But she looks kindly on the “lilting forms” of Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, a swooping, curving building that she describes as a place in which “the human body’s presence and movement in space [are] the animating features in a design.” She sees, correctly, that Gehry’s unusual forms are driven not by a desire to shock, but by a wish to find new ways to elicit a sense of pleasure.

Goldhagen puts much stock in surface—more so than in shape, in fact—and praises buildings that use a multiplicity of materials and finishes to create a sense of richness and texture. She analyzes with exquisite precision the experience of walking through Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute in La Jolla, California, explaining the sensuous nature of this great building and its ability to be at once powerful and deferential, receding before the magnificent vista of the Pacific Ocean.

Goldhagen’s extended discussion of the Salk Institute is a reminder of how excellent she is as an architecture critic. So is her analysis of Peter Eisenman’s Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, a vast warren of concrete blocks that was conceived to demonstrate the awfulness that can come from a seemingly rational structure carried to extremes, but that, as Goldhagen brilliantly observes, now functions more as a kind of entertaining maze, a fun house more than a metaphor for horror.

But if the experience of sensual satisfaction, of comfort, can sometimes come from daring and unusual buildings, do ordinary things at least guarantee us some degree of comfort as well? In other words, is the

plain suburban house OK—satisfying, if not great and important? Here again, Goldhagen makes clear that the priority she places on visual and psychological comfort should not be confused with an acceptance of the everyday or banal. She is impatient with developer-built housing for all the obvious reasons: cheap construction, poor and unsustainable materials, bad room arrangements, social isolation.

“No heed is paid to prevailing winds or to the trajectory of the sun’s rays,” she tells us, arguing that the people in such tract-house developments “lose out...on the well-established psychic and social benefits of being enmeshed in closer and looser networks of people.” To Goldhagen, the residents of these suburban communities have only slightly more control over their environment than do people in the slums of India or on the subway platforms of New York—two other kinds of places that Goldhagen asserts leave their occupants miserable.

It is hard to argue with any of this, or with the underlying premises for Goldhagen’s architectural preferences. She believes, first and foremost, that people need some connection to nature, particularly in terms of natural light, but also in terms of greenery and open space. She also believes they need community, a sense of accessibility, and visual variety and stimulation, although not to the point of confusion and chaos. People respond to patterns and to a human scale; soft forms are better than hard ones, refinement better than crudity. Goldhagen dislikes buildings that might be considered arbitrary or aggressive. But none of these are hard-and-fast rules, and creativity always overrides formulas.

Goldhagen pays relatively little attention to space, the least concrete element of architecture and, perhaps for this reason, the one that many architectural critics overemphasize. The physical reality of buildings—what they feel like and look like, how they are to touch, even the sounds and smells they produce—are of more interest to her than space alone, which I suspect she finds, at least conceptually, a bit of an indulgence, or at least a way for many architects and critics to avoid engaging with the physical things that Goldhagen builds her arguments around.

In order to make her case, Goldhagen invokes scientists like Irving Biederman, the psychologist who came up with the concept of *geons*: basic form-shapes, like cylinders, wedges, bricks, and cones, that we can easily identify and that help us understand more complex objects. We recognize these forms intuitively, Goldhagen tells us, in the same

way that we respond to symmetry, which we value innately, in part because of the symmetrical nature of the human body.

But—and here the perceptions of the architecture critic take precedence over the insights of the cognitive psychologist—symmetry in the wrong circumstances, Goldhagen warns, can be flat, dull, or boring, which are other forms of discomfort. She contrasts the utter banality of the symmetrical Mansudae Assembly Hall in Pyongyang, North Korea, with the richness of the Parthenon, and observes that the various buildings that surround the latter are arranged asymmetrically, which helps give the Parthenon's symmetry a sense of energy, movement, and balance. "The logic of their placement eschews simple math and takes cues instead from the embodied physics of our place on the ground and our movement through the topography of the hilly Acropolis site," she writes, concluding that the contrast between the mathematical regularity of the Greek temples themselves and their asymmetrical arrangement is a source of "the palpably productive tension we feel as we move around and experience the site."

Here, as in so many other parts of the book, Goldhagen's descriptions of being in front of actual works of architecture, both the good and the bad, are gems of fresh perception and clear expression. She is an articulate and consistent advocate of the kind of civilized, humane built environment that most of our best critics and historians have long favored. She can be stern, but she is not cynical. Indeed, she is the opposite of cynical, given how much of her thesis stems from the belief that once people become more enlightened about what constitutes a good environment, they will demand better design and turn the tide in its favor.

But perhaps the most striking thing about this book is that for all of Goldhagen's reliance on science, and for all the care with which she has studied the findings of cognitive psychology and social science, the conclusions she reaches are not different from those reached by others who have struggled to figure out why some buildings and cities please us and others do not. There is a long list of critics and writers who have inquired into the phenomenon of architecture and how it affects us: for example, Steen Eiler Rasmussen, whose *Experiencing Architecture* was published in the late 1950s and has been followed by (among others) Witold Rybczynski's *How Architecture Works* and Alain de Botton's *The Architecture of Happiness*, as well as my own *Why Architecture Matters*.

Goldhagen uses science to back up her conclusions, but that hasn't brought her to

a place that is noticeably different from the views of her predecessors. I don't think she has advanced "a radically new paradigm of the built environment's role in human life," as the publicity material for this book claims. The spaces and places she admires are pretty much the same ones that other critics and historians have admired; the places she finds toxic are pretty much the same ones that others have found toxic as well.

We shouldn't really be surprised by this. After all, the Greeks figured out plenty without cognitive psychology, and Irving Biederman didn't invent the golden ratio. We've always had an innate sense of what gives us pleasure and what doesn't. With Goldhagen's book, we know more about why this is, and she has made an important contribution in trying to integrate this knowledge into a sophisticated architectural sensibility.

But what science hasn't answered—and possibly can't—is why we still don't all agree on what we like, if we hold in common the desire to build and live in comfortable structures. Some people find sharp angles exciting and energizing, not hostile and off-putting. All of us have had different experiences with architecture and carry different memories: Surely the house and the street where you grew up has shaped you as much

as anything instinctive to human psychology. Nature counts for a lot, but so does nurture. And for all that we respond to in works of architecture, there is also such a thing as learned knowledge, which also influences how you experience buildings. Your high-school history teacher was right: Whether it's the Chartres Cathedral or Fallingwater or the Pyramids, when you know the backstory to these buildings, the experience of being there is enriched—it is not simply a matter of innate response.

And, finally, there is something else about architecture—or about any art—that science has not, thus far, helped us to understand. You can dissect Louis Kahn or Le Corbusier or Frank Lloyd Wright to the end of time, and Sarah Goldhagen does as well as anyone in explaining their excellence, and in separating the good from the bad. But there is something else, something that we cannot explain, that causes one building to be merely good and another to be awe-inspiring. What makes the Parthenon or the Salk Institute or the Amiens Cathedral or Wright's Unity Temple a masterpiece? Why is it that elements put together in one way make a building good, and put together in a slightly different way make it magic? One thing that science hasn't revealed yet is what creates the sublime. ■

**BORIS LURIE
IN HABANA**

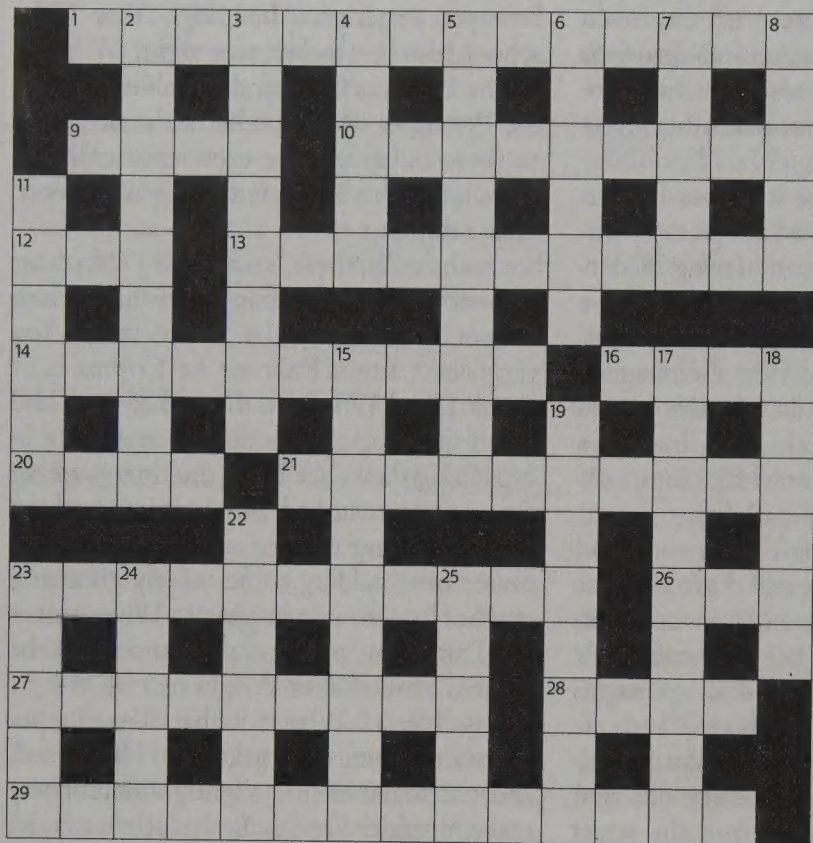
**THROUGH JAN 7
MUSEO NACIONAL
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borislurieart.org

Boris Lurie. Lumuba is Dead. 1959-1961 (detail)

Puzzle No. 3445

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

- 1 Loud birds: a tweeter and a Western cuckoo at savannah's edge (9,5)
 9 Superb location to hold a bunch of parties (4)
 10 One terrible concert featuring Rossini's overture is like this: (7)
 12 and 26 Ask an individual to leave (6)
 13 Shoulder positions for a dancer with fundamental substances, including phosphorus and gold (11)
 14 S is something found in a bathroom (10)
 16 The avant-garde of music? That's definitely not us (4)
 20 After one-for-one trade-in—a TV receptor (4)
 21 Buggy returned, carrying Washington beneath the Delaware, say (10)
 23 Proper and organized, Ray originally could live with basic medical attention (7,4)
 26 See 12
 27 Improve the looks of Dorothy's aunt, a little like Kristen? (9)

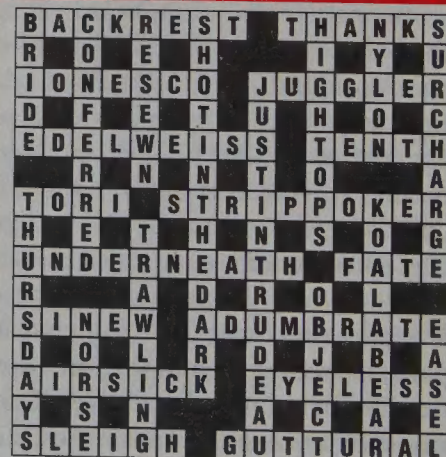
28 and 29 Engineer caught defaming prof with a song popularized by artists hiding in three Across entries (4,3,5,6)

DOWN

- 2 Devout soldier breaks into lousier bughouse (9)
 3 It might be Holy Creator, protecting leader of Catalans before the Spanish (8)
 4 Musical component of *Humanae vitae* (5)
 5 One living abroad close to France adopts 2 group, largely free of guilt (9)
 6 Windows hardware put up around space station to economize (6)
 7 Oddly, art designs boosted domestic consumption? (3,2)
 8 Places quotes in speech (5)
 11 Ill-treated vehicle impounded in narcs' escalation (6)
 15 Poultry and climbing vine in Rhode Island beginning to interest ruler (5,4)
 17 All hail strange oath involving gentle, captivating female (4,3,2)
 18 A bite of fungus containing salt (6)
 19 Fermented paste conceals tiny flower (5,3)
 22 Jump up and start to layer a rice dish (6)
 23 Fold petition on time (5)
 24 Saturate caps of inky mushrooms before using enoki (5)
 25 Insect in a park disappeared (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3444

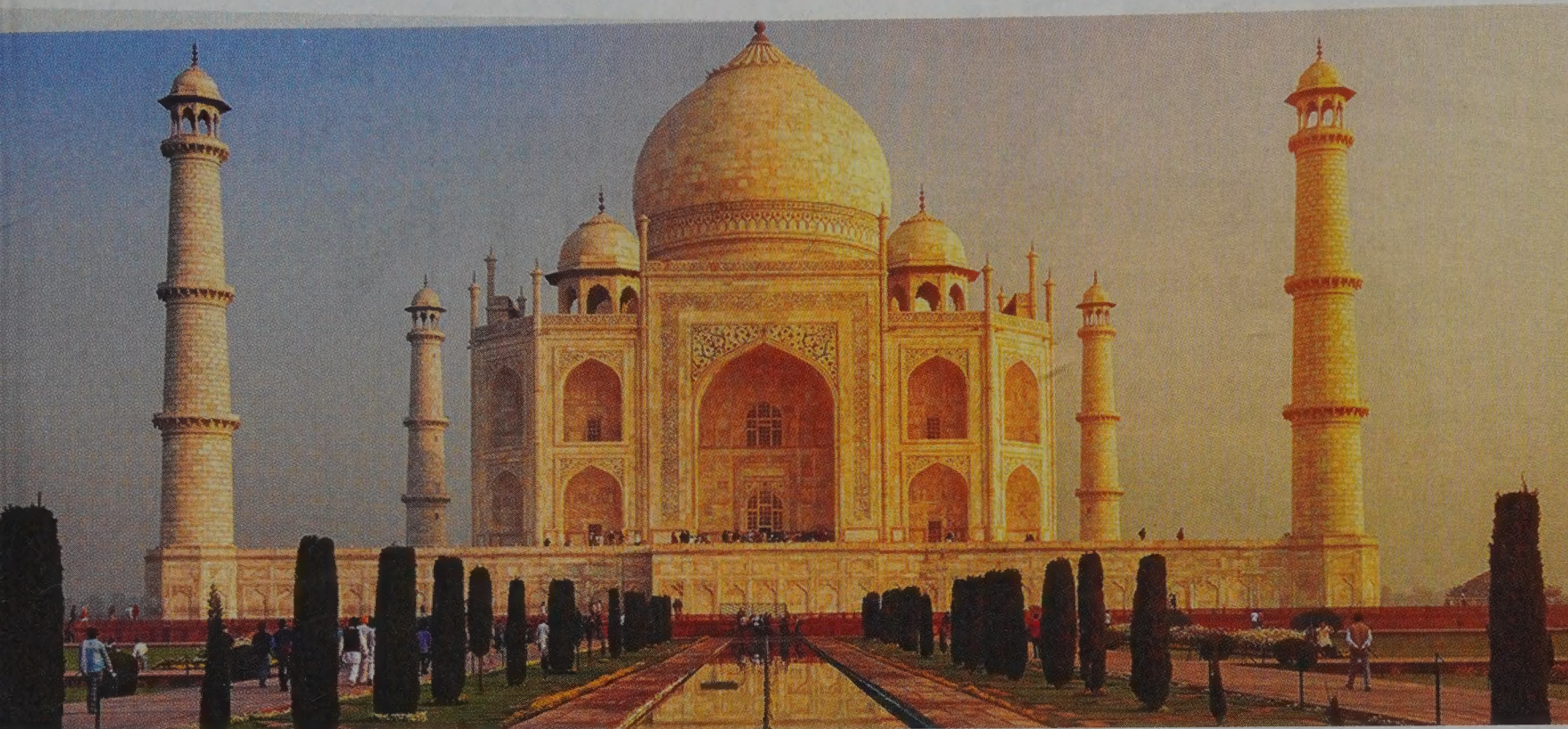
ACROSS 1 BA(CK)REST 5 T(HANK)S
 9 hidden 10 JUG + G(L)ER (reg rev.)
 11 letter bank 12 TENT + H 13 2 defs.
 14 ST + RIPP(OK)ER 17 anag. 18 FAT E
 20 SIN + EW 22 A DUMB RATE
 24 anag. 25 "I-less" 26 S(L + E)IGH
 27 GUT + T + URAL
 DOWN 1 B + RIDE 2 C ON F + ERRED
 3 alternate letters 4 SHO[w] + TINT(H)ED
 ARK 6 HI(GHTO)P + S (Goth anag.)
 7 NY + LON[don] 8 SUR(CHAR)GE
 10 JUST INTRUDE + AU 13 THUR
 (anag.) + S(D)AYS 15 K.O. + A LAB + EAR
 16 T + RAW LING 19 2 defs. 21 NO(R)SE
 23 [w]EASEL



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